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LECTURES  
ON THE  
INSUFFICIENCY  
OF  
UNREVEALED RELIGION,  
AND ON THE  
SUCCEEDING INFLUENCE OF CHRISTIANITY;  
DELIVERED IN THE  
ENGLISH CHAPEL AT ROME,  
DURING THE  
*SUNDAYS OF ADVENT MDCCCXXX, AND OF LENT MDCCCXXXI.*

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BY THE  
REV. RICHARD BURGESS,  
CHAPLAIN.

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“ And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house.”—*Acts* xxviii. 30.

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TO THE  
REV. WILLIAM STEPHEN GILLY, M.A.  
PREBENDARY OF DURHAM AND VICAR OF NORHAM.

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MY DEAR GILLY,

THERE are some reasons, independently of the ties of friendship, which induce me to lay the following pages before you. The scene of a portion of your labours has been in Italy, as well as mine; and your benevolent exertions, in behalf of an interesting people (whom, by the by, you have shown in your late publication to be the connecting link between the primitive churches and the Reformation), will endear you to the friends of religious liberty, and to all those who pray for the prosperity of our “Zion.” In looking over the following Preface, you will be reminded, as I have been, of the circumstances which first procured me the happiness of your acquaintance. In the year 1823, you preached

at Rome, in the “ Palazzo” I have named, near the Mausoleum of Augustus, and, in pursuing the train of reflections to which that incident gave rise, you anticipated my hopes of a brighter gospel-day arising upon the Continent of Europe. Some weeks afterwards, when we separated on the Via Flaminia, you made your first visit to the Waldenses. An interval of nine years, and your unwearied efforts, have realised, hitherto, your most sanguine expectations in the valleys of Piedmont. The Preface of this work will enable you to judge how far mine have been realised under a different aspect.

Wishing that the Divine blessing may repose upon all your endeavours, at home and abroad, for the advancement of true religion, and the propagation of “ the faith once delivered to the saints,”

I am,

Your sincere and affectionate Friend,

RICHARD BURGESS.

## PREFACE.

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THE existence of a Protestant chapel at Rome, where the service of the Church of England is regularly performed during six months of the year, is of itself a circumstance worthy of attention ; for, whether it be viewed as a striking instance of religious toleration, coming in an unexpected direction, or as the means of softening those prejudices which the comprehensive term of heretic conveys to the vulgar, it cannot fail to be an object of interest to every one who espouses the cause of civil and religious liberty. The institution is already known to a considerable number of British subjects, who will know how to appreciate the concession which prepared for them the privilege of joining in the public worship of the Church of England at Rome ; but it is far from being generally understood that

such an act of liberality has proceeded from the councils of the Vatican. The author thinks, that every example of religious toleration, come from what quarter it may, is an accession to the cause of truth; and, if there be any merit in those who have overcome prejudice, or who have even made their policy conformable to means which may enable others so to do, it is due to them to acknowledge and commend such liberality in the face of civilised society; for religious toleration, not otherwise than mercy, “is twice blessed:” it blesses those that give, and those that take. If it be necessary to declare a motive for the publication of the following Lectures, which were not originally intended for the press, the author had rather such motive were discovered in the sentiments he has just expressed, than in any opinion he might be supposed to have of the merits of his composition; for the only thing remarkable he has to offer in his Lectures is, that they were delivered in a Protestant assembly at Rome. It might have been thought too gratuitous in the author to have put forth any statement of the following

nature without some additional inducement ; but, as an introduction to these Lectures, it will hardly appear superfluous—perhaps it is necessary.

The English chapel may now be considered as having the sanction of the Papal government, although no official grant has yet been made which would ever acknowledge its existence.

As early as the winter of 1816-17, English families began to reside in Rome in sufficient numbers to require “ an house ” for public worship : considerable difficulty was then experienced in procuring an apartment to be dedicated to such a purpose : the object was new, alarming, and contrary to the existing laws ; but at length, through the influence of Signor Luigi Chiaveri, to whom the English have often been indebted for his kind offices in this respect, a private room was obtained, near the Column of Trajan : and thus began the service of the reformed Church of England in the “ Holy City ! ” The duties were discharged by any clergyman who, happening to be present, had the zeal to offer his gratuitous services : the necessary ex-

penses were defrayed by the voluntary contributions of the congregation, and the slender funds administered by the kindness of Lieutenant-General Ramsay.

As no permission had been obtained from the authorities (for such a demand must necessarily have been met by a refusal), the new “conventicle” owed its existence entirely to the forbearance of the government. But it was not clear whether such mildness might not soon have to yield to the more austere interpreters of the law, and it is said, that the attention of a high dignitary, attracted by the concourse of vehicles during divine service, had nearly proved fatal. There can indeed be no doubt that some representation was formally made of the illegality and danger of permitting such an unheard of assembly, and a word from the Vatican at that moment might have dissolved the elements of it without doing much violence to the opinion of any one. The enlightened and liberal Gonsalvi, however, perceiving that the English were at Rome in the nineteenth century, and Catholic Ireland still laboured under civil disabilities,



would know nothing of an illegal assembly in the Forum of Trajan, and that assembly duly appreciated his liberality.

It is not to be supposed there was any intention, on the part of the civil authorities, to introduce the principle of religious toleration into the city of Rome : such a supposition would be little less than an impeachment of the minister : nor did the appearance of a new kind of worship work wonders in the sentiments of the listless multitude ; but it had the effect of making some of them suspect that heresy, according to the definition they had heard of it, might not be altogether synonymous with infidelity, and the very circumstance of choosing a “ festival” (Sunday) for the day of worship, showed at least some traces of church authority. It was soon discovered by the most intelligent of the lower orders, to which, of course, these remarks apply, that the English had a sort of mass of their own, and the solemnity observable in their manner of attending to it was archly compared with the careless genuflections of the Roman signori. In this manner the forbearance of the government was

transfused into the minds of such of the populace as thought at all on the subject : it was not provided that it should be so, it was a natural consequence. During the first two or three seasons, such may be considered to have been the secret moral influence of the English congregation ; and the most zealous guardians of pontifical authority had nothing to fear, and, it is to be hoped never will have, from any overt acts of proselytism on the part of the officiating ministers. The protection afforded to the new congregation, although but a negative one, had been hitherto sufficient for all practical purposes ; but it was still equivocal, and when the old apartment could no longer be procured, it was not possible to induce a private individual to incur the responsibility of becoming the new landlord : the displeasure of the authorities might be incurred.— There was something which still required explanation, a public assembly of this nature, in the house of a Roman citizen, might cause him to be placed at the bar of the Inquisition\* ; at the same time a

\* This word must not be allowed to convey to the reader any false notions. The inquisition at Rome (although contrary in

semi-official intimidation was given, that great caution and privacy should be observed by the English in the exercise of their privilege. It would, however, have required a very vigorous execution of the law to prevent a foreigner, who had already his "own hired house," from inviting his countrymen to a private assembly : and under this form (it must be confessed a pretext) divine service was celebrated in a commodious room in the Vicolo degli Avignonesi, situated near the site of the ancient circus of Flora ! Thus did the Protestant congregation migrate from Trajan's Forum to the opposite declivity of the Quirinal Hill. The privacy suggested by the secretary of state was, perhaps, the best method of co-operating with his benevolent intentions ; a motive less dignified may not be imputed to the virtuous mind of Pope Pius VII. At that period it would not have been difficult to outrage the feelings of many devout plebeians by an

*principle* to all our ideas of religious liberty) is, at this time, a mild tribunal in its *administration* ; some cases of injustice there must necessarily be, but it is of no use to deal in misrepresentation.

over-ready sanction of the nonconformity. Evident marks of pious indignation had been more than once observed in the populace at the sight of the Protestant bier ; and although the more enlightened portion of the community were far from joining in this display of superstition, it shows that, if a less liberal policy with regard to the English worship had been adopted by the Government, it would not have been at variance with the then popular feeling : that it was not adopted does honour to the memory of Pius VII. and his minister. But ten years have been sufficient to change that feeling as much in favour of the institution, as ever it could be against the precarious assembly : and it is now perhaps regarded by that same populace as the surest pledge of those advantages which they expect to reap from the presence of the English.

In the Autumn of the year 1822, the author first took a share in endeavouring to promote the welfare of the establishment. It was his good fortune to meet on that occasion with a reverend person, now, alas, no more ! but whose name is entitled to hold the chief place in this narra-

tion. Whatever benefit may finally result from the Institution in question (and it is only intended to speak here of that benefit which consists in a mutual removal of religious strife and prejudice, in which Rome will surely be the gainer), the name of the Rev. Joseph Cooke, is continually to be kept in remembrance<sup>1</sup>. By his zeal, tempered with discretion and judgment, and by his exertions (in which the author of the following Lectures took but a small part), two essential steps were taken and secured : first, an apartment was hired, avowedly for the celebration of Divine Service ; and secondly, the connivance of the authorities was made equivalent to a sanction. The English worship then first as-

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Cooke (late fellow of Christ's College, Cambridge,) was a man of great literary accomplishments, mingled with solid piety, and devotion to his profession. His ardent pursuit of knowledge led him to undertake a journey into the East, in 1825, and he appears to have sunk under the fatigue of it : he died suddenly whilst sitting upon his dromedary, in a mountain-pass, called Ras Wady Hebran, about half way between the Convent of St. Catherine and Tor, five miles north of Mount Serbal. He was interred by a Greek Papas, in consecrated ground, near the Twelve Wells of Elim and the Palm Grove. May this tribute of respect for the memory of a good man survive the fleeting pages which contain it.

sumed the nature of an establishment : it was held in the Corea Palace, situated in the Via Pontifice, close to the Mausoleum of Augustus. The number of winter residents had now greatly augmented, the congregation consisting of not less than 200 persons, and the assemblage of equipages could not fail to attract the attention of the public.

It was not long before a cry of alarm was raised amidst these proceedings, and the infant Institution again trembled for its existence. The officiating ministers were accused of intemperate zeal, a conference was held with an influential personage, and a positive interference of the executive power was now apprehended. This led to the formation of a Committee, to be called upon in case of necessity, to act in the name and on the behalf of the English residents, there being no diplomatic minister at the court of Rome. But the policy and good sense of Cardinal Gonsalvi were proof against all weak remonstrances, and it was at length intimated to the officiating ministers, that no obstacle would be offered to their temperate proceedings. En-

couraged by this protection, Mr. Cooke, by means of a public subscription, procured the necessary appendages for a place of worship: the church books could only be obtained through the kindness of Mr. Hamilton, British minister at Naples, a beadle was also appointed, with authority to collect the subscriptions, and thus the winter of 1822-3, may be regarded as the commencement of the institution.

The attention of the Protestants resident at Rome had already been directed to the wasteground allotted for burying their dead. Beyond the Aventine Mount, and under the walls of the city within, stood a few scattered tomb-stones, exposed to the trampling of cattle grazing in the *Preta del Popolo*, and to the still greater injury of human footsteps. Decency seemed to require that the graves which had just grown green, should be secured from further encroachment, and that the few monuments should not be allowed to fall into ruins. A subscription to a considerable amount was collected, for the purpose of carrying the design into effect; but upon application to the competent authorities, it

was alleged, that a wall would obstruct the view of the pyramid of Caius Cestius ; and that the trees, which the friends of the deceased loved to plant round the tombs, had already begun the mischief. This answer being received, and no further hopes of success held out, the money subscribed was returned to the original donors, and the circumstance made an unfavourable impression abroad, of the toleration of the Papal Government. In a discussion of the catholic claims in the House of Lords, a noble lord, an opposer of those claims, was not slow to cite this as a remarkable instance of Roman Catholic intolerance. It is not clear that it was so ; but the act of toleration in permitting the English service which was evident, ought not to have been passed over in silence : it, perhaps, might not have been known. The discussion in the British Senate was not, however, unheeded in the Vatican council ; for, during that very summer, and entirely at the expense of the “ Apostolic Chamber,” a sunk fence was dug round the old burial-place ; another eligible spot of ground beyond the Pyramid was surrounded by a solid



wall, and henceforth assigned for the Protestant cemetery. It only remained to secure and build up the sunk fence, for which work permission was now readily obtained, and the year following, the English, in conjunction with the German Protestants, not only secured the old burial-ground, but also raised a fund of a thousand dollars, which yields annually a sum sufficient to keep the whole in repair, and procure the services of a sexton. “The Senate and the Roman people” have a prescriptive right over all that ground about the Monte Testaccio, called the Prata del Popolo ; a fee of about two pounds is, therefore, demanded for every interment which takes place. No one will be inclined to consider this extravagant ; but the fine (amounting to an equal sum) which is paid into the criminal court of the Cardinal Vicar, awakens a different feeling, and will, no doubt, be abolished, whenever the government of Rome shall have leisure to attend to minor abuses. In the mean time, the cemetery is placed under the protection of the Prussian minister ; and those who have to lament the loss of friends interred under the walls of Rome, may

at least have this poor consolation, that their bones repose in a becoming security, and their monuments excite a sympathetic sigh in the breast of many a northern pilgrim<sup>1</sup> !

In the year following the grant of the new burial-ground, the author had the great satisfaction of again co-operating with Mr. Cooke, in the service of the chapel : it was found impracticable to secure the same apartments for a second season, the apprehension of giving offence to the ecclesiastical authorities having not yet been done away. The excellent Pius VII. was now no more, and Leo XII. had only appeared as a disciplinarian. After the two first Sundays of the season, the term in the Corea Palace expired, and the congregation of 1823-4, seemed to be dispossessed of all its former privileges. But the precedent having been established, should another situation be to be found in any part of Rome, it could not be thought a more rash experiment than the former had been, were it put in the

<sup>1</sup> Two English poets are interred in the Old and New Burial-grounds respectively. John Keats and Bysshe Percy Shelley : the ashes of the latter were sent by his poetical friends from the gulf of Spezia.

same requisition. After some difficulty, two commodious rooms were procured in the Via Rasella, a street which lies nearly under the garden-wall of the Quirinal Palace, the occasional residence of the Pope. The adopting of this situation will appear nothing extraordinary to those who are acquainted with Rome : and if the new government had been capable of taking offence at a meeting of heretics, because it had approached so near the precincts of the Papal gardens, it would equally have discovered the blemish upon the “ holy city ” in a more remote “ rione ; ” but Leo XII., whose wisdom as a sovereign has been too little appreciated, and his piety too much disparaged, reasoned like a statesman. “ It is much better,” said the Holy Father, “ to permit the continuance of this assembly ; for, if it be prohibited, the English cannot be prevented from meeting in small numbers at their own private abodes, and thus, instead of one such congregation, we shall have twenty.” It had not, probably, escaped the notice of Leo XII., that the English chapel had not yet shared in those wholesome regulations which were in-

troduced by him, for preserving the internal order of the city. The weekly assemblage of carriages at a stated time and place, could not fail to attract the curiosity of the Roman people, which the presence of a police-officer might easily restrain. Without any application on the part of the officiating clergyman, and without any previous intimation from any quarter, Mr. Cooke and the author were not more surprised than rejoiced to find, upon arriving to perform the morning service, two sentinels stationed at the chapel door. The carriages had all disappeared from their usual rendezvous, in consequence of a general order of the police : a more than common silence pervading the neighbourhood of the Via Rasella, it was now evident the authorities had at length interfered ; but they interfered for the protection of the English congregation. To Pope Leo XII. then they are indebted for this great privilege, which may be said to have thus received his sanction in January 1824. Thus encouraged, and being assured from a private communication, that it was the intention of the government to allow the English

the free exercise of their worship, the officiating ministers now performed Divine service in their canonical robes. The propriety of making some suitable return for this privilege was next suggested, and hence the origin of the charitable fund, which will be mentioned in the sequel.

The spiritual duties of the chapel were gratuitously discharged, and all clergymen of the Established Church, who happened to be at Rome, were invited to contribute their services : the rent of the apartment and incidental expenses were supplied by voluntary subscription, the administration of which fund gradually became the business of the committee, which had been originally formed for the purposes before mentioned. The author cannot let pass this opportunity of acknowledging the important and continued exertions of the Marquess of Northampton, and the laudable services of Dr. James Clarke, (author of the “ Influence of Climate,” &c.) during his long residence in Rome.

The number of British travellers in Italy increased so greatly, that the rooms in the Via

Rasella were far from being sufficiently large for the Protestant Anglo-Roman congregation, nor was their site one of the most convenient. Accordingly, in the year 1824-25, the committee exerted itself to find a place at once more appropriate and more permanent : it was desirable to fix the wandering congregation, which had now almost made the circuit of the Campus Martius. During the first few weeks of the season, the anxiety of former years was renewed ; but at length, after diligent inquiry, the capacity of a chapel was discovered in a large granary near the Porta del Popolo : it became expedient to have a lease of a building which must needs be fitted up at a considerable expense, before it could answer the purpose. The income, however necessary for defraying the yearly rent, depending on the contingency of future congregations, there were no funds to answer any engagement beyond the year. The committee was relieved from this embarrassment by the generous and patriotic offer of a distinguished statesman, who guaranteed the payment of the rent for three years in case of the English

ceasing, from any unforeseen cause, during that period, to resort to Rome. The institution was not less indebted on that occasion to the professional services of the Rev. J. Hugh Rose.

It has been supposed by many, that the chapel was removed without the walls of the city at the instance of the civil authorities, which is an erroneous notion, and ought in justice to be corrected. The government approved of the situation, but the committee were not controlled in choice of it. Indeed, it would have been hardly possible to have procured, within the city walls, a room sufficiently commodious, and in every other respect so convenient for the large congregation, which is now to be seen in the English chapel, upon which, at different periods, not less than a sum of £250 has been expended in bringing it to its present form. The author has witnessed as many as five hundred and fifty persons within its walls; and those who have seen it since the year 1829, will agree that there is nothing wanting in it for all the purposes of a Church of England congregation.

During the two succeeding winters the duties

of the chapel were discharged, as before, by the gratuitous services of clergymen casually resident at Rome ; but in the year 1827, the committee decided to ensure the performance of the regular duty by erecting it into a chaplaincy, their finances enabling them to offer a salary of 100*l.* per annum.

In considering the happy influence gradually effected in the minds of the common people by the growth of this institution, the charitable fund already alluded to is an important feature. It consisted at first of the alms collected at the holy communion, which, in the former seasons, amounted to a comparatively small sum. In Mr. Cooke's first year, the sum total was about 150 dollars, it increased every succeeding season, together with the number of communicants, until it reached, in the year, 1826 and 1827, the sum of 100*l.* Cases of distressed British subjects being very rare at Rome, the whole of this fund was applied to the relief of the Italian paupers ; in 1827 and 1828, it grew into still greater importance.

The number of applicants, as may be easily



imagined, was by far too heavy for the funds : about 200 names were already inscribed in the list, which reduced the monthly relief to a very small pittance, so that, without either diminishing the number of pensioners, or increasing the funds for a more generous relief of the whole, the charity was in danger of promoting mendicity, rather than adapted to the effectual succour of the deserving indigent, and the encouragement of honest industry. It was only necessary to make the circumstances known to decide upon the alternative. The chaplain had recourse to the means of a charity sermon, which was preached on the 30th of March, 1828, and was the cause of nearly 120*l.* being added to the stock. The alms collected at the altar were proportionally increased, so that in the course of this season about 1200 dollars (270*l.*) was distributed in monthly relief : and this, independently of private donations, in some special cases, which did not appear upon the charity books. The rumour of English munificence now ran through the habitations of misery, the Parish priests were assailed for their official sig-

natures to the numerous petitions, which set forth, in all the varied eloquence of the Italian language, the miseries of poverty and disease. The successful candidates extolled too highly the “ almsgiving nation,” and gave the less fortunate false notions of its eleemosynary deeds. The rule to be observed by the administrators of the funds was simple. It was to calculate how many families might be effectually relieved during the winter months, and then make the selection from such recommendations and knowledge of the cases, as made out the best title to their consideration, the names already on the list having of course the first claim to investigation ; but since written recommendations were sometimes too easily procured, the chaplain, whose business it had now become to dispense the charity of his congregation, could hardly discharge the duty conscientiously without a personal verification of the varied pretensions, to accomplish which task it was necessary to visit one hundred and fifty abodes of poverty. In this manner the charity books were made conformable to the increased resources, and by

a careful distribution, the whole was adequate to the relief of about two hundred and thirty families. This may suffice, without entering into “the annals of the poor,” or the affecting narratives of decayed nobility, to give the reader an idea of the nature and extent of British charity at Rome. Let him not say that it “begins at home;” for this will not add one gift more to the domestic “treasury,” and it might take one from the “*poveri vergognosi* :” let him lament (if it seems reasonable) the temporary absence of his fellow-citizens; but if the Samaritan *does* “journey in the wilderness,” it is better not to imitate the priest and the levite: and if it be expedient for a strange community, enjoying the advantages of a foreign country, and receiving the hospitable protection of its government, to make any return, there can be none more suitable than when partaking of the local privileges, to share proportionally the burden of alleviating the local distresses.

In the year 1828-29, the sum-total of the charity-fund fell a little short of the preceding

year, and since that period it has, from unavoidable circumstances, decreased, nor can it ever be expected to exceed the year of the first charity sermon, if even it ever reaches an equal amount. But it has already procured the only recompense which was at all desirable for a Protestant congregation—a number of grateful souls have come to the conclusion, that the English must really be Christians ; nor is it one of the least remarkable things, that the Jews should be admitted to a share of this charity. A learned rabbi, encouraged by the impartial benevolence of the English congregation, represented to the author the misery and poverty of the Ghetto, and wondered whether the despised Jews could ever find a drop of pity in the breast of a Christian. Upon being told, that in the dispensing of the English charity there was no distinction of persons, and that the superior claim only came from the greater weight of misery, the Israelite rejoiced, and considered the sum of five pounds given during the week of the Passover as an ample confirmation of “ the good report :” this

was repeated in subsequent years, and the English bounty was dispensed, in unleavened bread, through the squalid habitations of this unprivileged people.

If the incidents here related appear trifling, the result is at least extraordinary—a Protestant cemetery, a Church of England service, and a charitable fund, dispensed at a reformed altar, to the devoted subjects of the “Sovereign Pontiff.”

Those who are curious about the signs of the times, will easily admit these into the number ; but the philosophical reader, who has contemplated the spirit of a Hildebrand, or even the precocious tolerance of a Ganganelli, will rather see in it this maxim, that neither kings nor priests have power against the general opinion of mankind : concession to that opinion may be mere expediency, whilst the principle of opposition to it remains the same ; but such expediency is, in matters of state-policy, wisdom ; and, in religion, becomes—toleration. The object of this memoir is to acknowledge the latter in four successive pontiffs of Rome. Under these impres-

sions, the author will not run the risk of offending either Rome or her “partisans.” He will only express a hope, that the emulation which has been excited in the vicinity of the English congregation, may never go beyond the only legitimate means of opposition, viz. argument and persuasion : nor will it, on the other hand, ever be expected to restrain the weaker portion of a community from gratifying an innocent curiosity.

The subject of the First Series of the following Lectures, was chosen from its appropriation to the season of Advent : the latter Series seemed a proper continuation of the argument. They were written with very little aid except the author’s common-place book, and, in many instances, he was at a loss how to acknowledge the source of his information. The notes and illustrations were subsequently added. A desire to preserve the Lectures as they were preached, has caused them to be presented in a more imperfect form than they might have been, had they been originally written for publication. About fifty persons of the audience declared

they had received instruction from hearing, and on that account desired to possess them : and hoping that by the blessing of God, fifty more might derive benefit from their perusal, the Author determined to commit them to the press, well persuaded, that the chance of drawing the attention of one hundred persons, in the present day, to the things which belong to their peace, would require no apology.

*Chatelaine, near Geneva, Feb. 11th, 1832.*





# CONTENTS.

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## FIRST SERIES.

### LECTURE I.

THE ATTAINMENTS IN PHILOSOPHY INADEQUATE TO THE RIGHT  
KNOWLEDGE AND WORSHIP OF THE DEITY.

Men are forgetful of common Blessings, page, 1—3—How this subject should be treated, p. 4, 5—Division of the Lectures, p. 6—The existence of a God, p. 7, 8—Ancient Philosophers, p. 9—Atheism of Pagan Philosophers, p. 10, 11—Opinions of Socrates, p. 12—System of Plato and Aristotle, p. 13—Plato borrowed from Moses, p. 14, 15—The Platonic Trinity, p. 16—Aristotle's Doctrine of a Providence, p. 17.—Aristotle's Doctrine of a Trinity, p. 18, 19—Conclusions in unrevealed Religion, p. 20—Idolatry of Aristotle, p. 21, 22—Insufficiency of Human Philosophy, p. 23—Heathen Doctrines have no Moral Influence, p. 24, 25—Reasons of this Tendency, p. 26—28—Scripture Attributes of the Deity, p. 29, 30.—Object and Nature of Christian Worship, p. 31, 32.

### LECTURE II.

HEATHEN MORALITY, ITS PRINCIPLES AND FINAL RESULTS.

Virtue in the Law of Nature, p. 34—Virtue only secured by Principle, p. 35—Evil of defective Knowledge, p. 36—St. Paul's Law of Nature, p. 37—St. Paul's View of the Law of Nature, p. 38—General Propositions, p. 39—Moral Precepts of the old Philosophers, p. 40, 41—Unsoundness of their Doctrines, p. 42—Plato

teaches Immorality, p. 43, 44—The Virtue of Stoics, p. 45—The Epicurean School, p. 46—Selfish Motives of Private Virtues, 47—Great Operation of Christian Doctrine, p. 48, 49—Moral Influence the Gospel, p. 50, 51—Consolation derived more from Motive than from Actions, p. 52, 53—Christian Piety triumphant, p. 54—Conclusion to be deduced, p. 55.

### LECTURE III.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS AND THEIR  
DOCTRINE OF FUTURE REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS, COM-  
PARED WITH THE REVEALED IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

The Gospel alone reveals a Future State, p. 58—Misery connected with Ignorance, p. 59—Various Opinions concerning the Nature of the Soul, p. 61—Doctrines of Pythagoras, p. 62, 63—A future State imperfectly discerned by the Heathen, p. 64, 65—Doctrines of the Pythagorean School, p. 66, 67—The Philosophers and the Multitude, p. 68, 69—That which is revealed, p. 70—The Separate State of the Soul, p. 71—St. Paul's Method of Comforting the Thessalonians, 72, 73—St. Paul's Authority limited, p. 74, 75—Curiosity left unsatisfied, p. 76—Mischief of Credulity, p. 77—General Resurrection revealed, p. 78, 79—Practical Conclusion and Consolation to be derived, p. 80, 81.

### LECTURE IV.

THE STATE OF RELIGION AMONG THE JEWS PREVIOUS TO THE  
COMING OF CHRIST.

Responsibility of the Jews, p. 83—The Advantages of the Jews, p. 84, 85—Their Idolatry and Depravity, p. 86—Origin of the Jewish Sects, p. 87—The Pharisees, p. 88, 89—Pythagorean Notions, &c. p. 90—The Souls of the Dead, p. 91, 92—Fatalism of the Stoics, p. 93—Evil of Traditions, p. 94—Perversion of Scripture by the Pharisees, p. 95, 96.—Pharisaical Hypocrisy, p. 97—Pharisaical Hypocrisy and Wicked Practices, p. 98, 99—The Scribes and Lawyers, p. 100—The Sadducees—Epicurean Deists, p. 101—

Origin of the Modern Karaites, p. 102, 103—The Essenes—Refined Pharisees, p. 104—Egyptian Theology, p. 105—Two Classes of the Essenes, p. 106, 107—The Herodians and the Galileans, p. 108—The Samaritans, p. 109—Need of a Saviour apparent, p. 110.—Inestimable Value of Revelation, p. 111—Conclusion, p. 112.

## SECOND SERIES.

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE  
PRIMITIVE CHURCHES, PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL  
DURING THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

---

### LECTURE I.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH AT  
JERUSALEM, AND THE SUBSEQUENT DISPERSION OF THE  
DISCIPLES, IN CONSEQUENCE OF THE MARTYRDOM OF ST.  
STEPHEN.

The earliest Effects of Christianity, p. 115—Christ's Church to be viewed spiritually, p. 116, 117—Preliminary observations, p. 118—The Christian Church at Jerusalem, p. 119, 120—Principles of apostolic Doctrine, p. 121, 122—The Communion of the Saints, p. 123, 124—Scripture the only infallible Authority, p. 125, 126—The Eucharist, p. 127—The Visible Church, p. 128, 129—Rapid Increase of the Primitive Believers, p. 130, 131—Institution of the Seven Deacons, p. 132—St. Stephen the Proto-Martyr, p. 133—Dispersion of the Church, p. 134—Extension of the Church, p. 135—First Persecution terminated, p. 136—Caligula afflicts the Jews, p. 137—The Holy Catholic Church, p. 138—Standard of Faith, p. 139—The Genuine Influence of Christian Doctrine, p. 140, 141—The Duties and responsibility of enlightened Nations, p. 142—144.

## LECTURE II.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH FROM THE ENDING OF THE FIRST PERSECUTION [A. D. 39] TO THE APOSTOLIC COUNCIL HELD AT JERUSALEM IN THE YEAR 49, INCLUDING THE OPENING OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN TO THE GENTILES BY ST. PETER.

Agency of the Holy Spirit, p. 146—The calling of the Gentiles by the mouth of St. Peter, p. 147, 148—St. Peter, his Name and Privileges, p. 149—The Church built upon Christ the Rock, p. 150, 151—Christ is the Rock, p. 152—The Keys committed to Peter, p. 153, 154—Peter's Fidelity, p. 155—The Gospel preached to the Heathen, p. 156, 157—Christ's Charge to Peter, p. 158, 159—The Pastoral Charge and Travels of Peter, p. 160-1—His latter End, p. 162—Authority of the Apostles, p. 163—The Power of binding and loosing exercised by the Apostles, p. 164—167—The true Foundation of Christ's Church and Kingdom, p. 168, 169—Joy in its Extension, p. 170.

## LECTURE III.

ON THE LABOURS OF PAUL AND BARNABAS, OR THE FIRST SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE HEATHEN NATIONS.

Subserviency of secondary Causes, p. 172—Personal superiority of Saul, a native of Cilicia, p. 173, 174—His Education and Pharisaical Zeal, p. 175, 176—The Effects of Conversion, p. 177—179—The Inspired Apostle appears at Jerusalem, p. 180, 181—His Preparation for the Ministry, p. 182—The Name and Qualities of the first Christians, p. 183, 184—The Apostles teach all Nations, p. 185—187—Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, p. 188—The first Mission to the Gentiles, p. 189—191—The Effects of Preaching, p. 192, 193—Antioch the Mother Church of the Gentiles, p. 194, 195—Human Nature and Divine Grace always in the same Relation, p. 196, 197—Sovereignty of Divine Grace and Man's Responsibility, p. 198, 199—The Scripture Alternative, p. 200, 201—Effects of Divine Grace from the examples on record, p. 202, 203—Trials for Spiritual Improvement to be expected, p. 204, 205.

## LECTURE IV.

ON THE LABOURS OF PAUL AND SILAS. PAUL'S SECOND JOURNEY INTO ASIA AND THROUGH MACEDONIA, GREECE, &c., UNTIL HIS VISIT TO JERUSALEM.—[A. D. 50 to 60.]

Moral Influence of Christianity, p. 207, 208—Religious Contention to be avoided, p. 209, 210—The Blessings of Religious Education, p. 211, 212—The Fore-knowledge of God, 213—Paul and Silas at Philippi, p. 214—and at Thessalonica, p. 215—The Fellow-labourers separate, p. 216, 217—The Epistles to the Thessalonians, p. 218—Paul Preaches at Athens, p. 219, 220—Dionysius the Areopagite, p. 221—Paul's Residence at Corinth, p. 222, 223—The Nazaritish Vow, p. 224—Apostolic Zeal and Labour, p. 225—Tumult at Ephesus, p. 226—St. Paul at Miletus, p. 227—His farewell, a proof of his integrity, and a model for Spiritual Pastors, p. 228, 229—The Epistle to the Galatians, p. 230—Judaizing Christians, p. 231—The Doctrine of Justification not of Works, p. 232, 233—Faith alone justifies, p. 234—Good Works follow Faith, p. 235, 236—Application of the subject, p. 237, 238.

## LECTURE V.

ST. PAUL'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM, AFTER HIS LABOURS IN THE EAST, INCLUDING A REVIEW OF THE CHURCHES, AND THE REST OF HIS ACTS UNTIL HIS DEPARTURE FOR ROME.

The Truth of Prophecy exemplified in the Events, p. 240, 241—Christianity spread over the whole Roman Empire, p. 242, 243—The Church at Babylon, p. 244, 245—Remote Vestiges of Christianity, p. 246—St. Paul's Voyage towards Palestine, p. 247—At Cesarea, he tarries with Philip, p. 248—The trying Prophecy of Agabus, p. 249—Lessons of Christian Piety for our Instruction, p. 250—252—Awful condition of Jerusalem, p. 253—St. Paul in Danger of his Life, p. 254—Adopts the Jewish customs, p. 255—Tumult raised by the Jews at Jerusalem, p. 256—259—

Paul brought before Felix, p. 260—Arrival of Festus at Cesarea, p. 261—Paul's conduct secures him respect, p. 262—Character of St. James the Less, p. 263, 264—His Martyrdom, p. 265—The last days of the Holy City, p. 266—Warnings and Exhortations, p. 267, 268—Similar effects of Preaching, p. 269—A Criterion of the true Doctrine, and of its reception, p. 270, 271.

## LECTURE VI.

ST. PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ITALY—THE STATE OF CHRISTIANITY ON HIS ARRIVAL AT ROME [A. D. 62.]—THE REST OF THE ACTS—CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

Active zeal in any cause a mark of sincerity, p. 273, 274—The Apostle's zeal ratified, p. 275—The Power of God's Truth, p. 276 St. Paul's Departure, p. 277—His Voyage to Italy, p. 278—Predestination consistent with human actions, p. 279—Island of Malta, p. 280—Christian Meeting on the Via Appia, p. 281, 282—Paul's Arrival at Rome, p. 283—State of Christianity at Rome, p. 284—286—Believers of Distinction, p. 287—Paul calls the Leaders of the Jews together, p. 288, 289—The Apostolic Writings, p. 290—The Colossians and Laodiceans, p. 291—The Epistle to the Hebrews, p. 292, 293—The sedentary Labours and extensive Journeyings of Paul, p. 294—297—The First Apostacy in Asia, p. 298—Paul's second Imprisonment, p. 299—His undaunted Testimony, p. 300—The dying Christian, p. 301—The palm of Martyrdom, p. 302—Cruelty of Nero towards the Christians, p. 303—305—Early Corruptions of Christianity, p. 306—Scripture alone Infallible, p. 307—Conclusion, p. 308.

## **FIRST SERIES.**





# LECTURE I.

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THE ATTAINMENTS IN PHILOSOPHY INADEQUATE  
TO THE RIGHT KNOWLEDGE AND WORSHIP OF  
THE DEITY.

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ROMANS i. 20—23.

*For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*

It is perhaps the misfortune rather than the fault of human nature, that when men have been long in possession of a great and inestimable blessing, especially when they have never endured the risk of losing it, they grow insensible to its value, and receiving it as a matter of

course, neglect to acknowledge the source from whence it proceeds. A reflecting mind, indeed, will often arrive at a proper estimate of a privilege by computing what its condition would probably be without it : sometimes by observing and comparing the hard lot of others we may learn to appreciate our own happiness ; and the misfortunes of some frequently become the means of awakening in others a grateful sense of their exemption from them. The man whose riches protect him from want, might never reflect upon the favours of Providence, did he not sometimes contemplate the many thousands who wander upon the earth destitute and hungry : the constitution which is in the enjoyment of perfect health, might feel no cause for thankfulness, did not many a son and daughter of affliction languish before it in grief and pain ; and even the light of heaven would scarcely be esteemed a blessing, were it not for the alternation of darkness. But however obvious this method of comparing our moral advantages may appear, it is practised by a very small portion of mankind, and it generally happens that they who possess such advantages in a high degree, have less of that feeling of gratitude which really ought to be inspired. Now if this be true of “ the things which are seen and temporal,” it is much more so of “ the things that

are eternal." If there be so few who reflect upon their moral condition, in order to recognise and acknowledge the favours of Providence, much fewer are they who ever bestow a thought upon the blessings which result from their religious light and knowledge. The Gospel, which like the sun in the natural world, is a fixed body of light in the spiritual system, shines continually upon us; but in our favoured country we scarcely have the alternative of darkness to make us sensible of the value of the light. We lie down to rest, and we awake, without glorifying God for this, and without being thankful; or, perhaps, following too closely the heathen of whom the apostle speaks, we become vain in our own imaginations, and our foolish heart is darkened. But does this superior religious knowledge, in its general diffusion, exist among us? I suppose we are glad to lay claim to this national distinction. The foundation of all our prosperity as a people must be laid in something; the invisible influence which acts upon our social system, and makes us prosper, not for our virtues, but in spite of our vices, must be recognised in something: now I would place it in the influence, more or less remote, which Christianity still exercises over our land, so that I would say, it is to the revelation of Jesus Christ that we owe all that we have as men, and all that we are as

candidates for a better world. Already I think I hear the cold believer say, “perhaps,” and the philosopher whisper, “I doubt it.” One I know will talk of civilization; another of civil institutions and religious liberty; a third of the progress of human intellect; and in short, will link together a number of causes, just to divert the mind, if it were possible, from the grand cause; but I have still to affirm, my brethren, that without being indebted to any philosophy or civilization, whatever light and knowledge we possess, which at all can affect our probationary condition, this we owe entirely to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is there any one who doubts it? Is there any one who has given the fact so little consideration, that he hath hitherto omitted to appreciate duly the blessings of Divine revelation? Then is the subject of these Lectures more especially adapted for him; for it is my intention to endeavour to enhance the blessings of the Gospel light, by showing, in some measure, what men have been and are without it. I propose to inquire into the degree of light and knowledge in religious matters, which unassisted reason may attain to, as exemplified in the case of the heathen philosophers. I propose still further to inquire into the state of religion among the Jews, previous to the coming of Christ: the whole

tending to show the expediency and the necessity of a Divine revelation. In prosecuting these inquiries, we are not to forget the apostolic injunction about giving heed to “fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions rather than godly edifying, which is in faith;” I shall therefore avoid all those subtle refinements, in which the strength of reason becomes entangled as in a net, so that a word out of the mouth of babes and sucklings may lead the humbled giant captive. On the other hand, we are not to be scared by the loud but unmeaning cry of some who would descant on the danger and inutility of stepping out of the ordinary line of pulpit instruction: on the contrary, as our Gospel is able to stand the test of the most critical examination, and only acquires greater lustre by comparing it with the dimness which will be found over all other systems of religion, it becomes our duty, as the means of inquiry and the capacity of our audience extend, to follow that other positive injunction of the Apostle—“Prove all things, hold fast that which is good:” and if by a review of what the human mind has been able to attain unto, in matters of religion, unaided by the light of revelation, we can convince ourselves, that so far under similar circumstances we might have gone and no farther, then surely we shall be led to acknowledge the

grand source whence we have derived our superior knowledge, and consequently adore that “Saviour who hath brought life and immortality to light by means of the Gospel.” Then brethren, the most sceptical and learned amongst you will not be able to accuse us of demanding your assent blindly to things of which we have never proved to you the excellence, nor of dismissing from your faith the proper use of that reason and discrimination with which it has pleased God to endue you.

I propose to treat the subject which I have chosen for this and the three succeeding Sundays, in the following order:—On the present occasion, I shall examine what was the degree of light and knowledge to which the ancient philosophers attained; and, consequently, to which we might expect under like circumstances to attain, with regard to the nature of the Supreme Being, and a Divine Providence in human affairs, which is, strictly speaking, their *Theology*.

My second endeavour shall be to point out what they discovered as a system of relative and social duties: upon what principle the practice of virtue was generally inculcated: and how their moral lessons operated in the good of the community: and this will be to examine into their system of *Ethics*.

In the third place, I shall attempt to investigate their notions of the nature and faculties of the soul: what they believed of its origin, and immortality, and how they viewed rewards and punishments in a world to come: and this we may call their *Metaphysics*<sup>1</sup>.

In my fourth Lecture, I propose to consider how all these things were understood in the Jewish state, previous to the coming of Christ, and throughout the whole, continually to place the result of our enquiries in the light of God's word, so that the truth may appear manifest to every sound and unprejudiced mind.

There are some men who, in order to insinuate that revealed religion is so pure a matter of faith that no reason is admissible in it, delight to assert that the Scriptures alone *prove* the existence of a God, and this they say, not to do homage to the revealed word, but to set all reason at a distance from it, as two things contrary to one another. If they would say, that only in the Scriptures do we find the nature and character of the true God, and that although reason has gone far in establishing the truth, "that there is a God," it never could discover His nature and attributes, they would argue rightly; because

<sup>1</sup> This is not the division which the Stoics and some other sects made of their philosophy, but it will serve for our present purpose.

natural religion discovers the truth, that there is a Supreme Governor of the universe, but only revealed religion teaches us the nature of the Godhead and his relation to his intelligent creation<sup>1</sup>. St. Paul, you see, assumes this very position. The invisible things of him (that is to say, nothing less than His eternal power and divinity,) are clearly understood, and have been so ever since the world was made, from the visible works of creation ; so that if ever there had been no written revelation, this great truth would have been impressed on the natural mind, insomuch that as far as this article of faith goes, it stands revealed in the very visible creation. The fact here assumed, as well as the charge which St. Paul brings against the perverters of this article of natural religion, will easily be made apparent ; for we are enabled to show, from the light and knowledge attained by some heathen philosophers, that they really did understand the eternal power and Godhead from the visible works of His hands ; but this was their condemnation, “ that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ;

<sup>1</sup> Since this sentence was written, I have found the same idea more concisely expressed by a learned prelate: “ The power and majesty of God are recorded in the volume of nature ; his will and mercy in the volume of revelation.”—*Sermon at the opening of King’s College, &c.* p. 21.



but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

Among the ancient philosophers, the names of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pythagoras, Democritus, Zeno, Epicurus, stand pre-eminently distinguished : in their gigantic minds are concentrated all the contemplative efforts of unassisted reason<sup>1</sup>; each of them formed as it were a dominion of his own, and exercised therein a despotic sway over the human intellect. And if a proof of the divine origin of Christianity were required, it would have been enough to have witnessed this mental despotism dissolve before the unpretending and simple discourses of a few unlettered fishermen : it would have been enough to have seen the controversy of corporeal and incorporeal substances set at rest, and out of the chaos of an atomical physiology and the doctrine of incorporeals, a new world of light arise in all the simplicity of truth and the confidence of universal dominion.

If we pursue our inquiries beyond the ages of

<sup>1</sup> In comparing the inferior attainments of the Greek philosophers in *science* with their success in *metaphysics*, Mr. Herschel remarks, “ we are struck with their powers of acute and subtle disputation, their extraordinary success in abstract reasoning, and intimate familiarity with subjects purely intellectual.” *Discourse on the Study of Natural Philosophy*, p. 105.

the Greek philosophers, we shall find that it did not require their wisdom to establish the truth, that there is one intelligent Supreme Being, self-existent, and distinct from all created and visible objects ; but on the contrary, it was their meddling with this grand truth, stamped on the soul of man <sup>1</sup>, which caused them, and the world after them to err, and, finally, to “to walk in darkness and the shadow of death.” For it would be easy to trace the doctrine of the unity and self-existence of God, that is, His eternal power and Godhead, in every nation of the earth ; so that, as St. Paul saith, it has been known from the foundation of the world.

The effect of the visible things of God upon the philosophical mind was, to force upon it inquiry : that inquiry, proceeding by the feeble light of human reason, ended in leading the mind from the first principle, instead of conducting it to conviction ; but still it was urged on to confess the truth that the world must have been formed by some intelligent Being. We cannot say that Socrates and his disciples degenerated into any degrading notions of God,

<sup>1</sup> Ut porrò firmissimum hoc afferri videtur, cur deos esse credamus, quòd nulla gens tam fera, nemo omnium tam sit immanis, cujus mentem non imbuerit deorum opinio \* \* \* *omni autem in re consensio omnium gentium lex naturæ putanda est.*—Cicero in *Tusculan. Question.* lib. i. cap. 13.

because they took that side of the argument, which led them to incorporeal substances<sup>1</sup>; but Democritus, Leucippus, and their followers, did just that of which the apostle accuses them, “they became vain in their own imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.” Their object was, not to establish the truth of the existence of a God, but to get rid of that truth, and they, therefore, had recourse to the atomical system, pretending that “the visible things of the world” were made up of atoms, of which they called the whole substance, God. But since this world seemed to be moved by some intelligence, it necessarily became difficult to account for it in the casual concourse of atoms; either therefore the substantial world itself must be intelligent, or else it must contain some incorporeal agency, which pervades or actuates the whole mass. To assert the former, were to make lifeless matter intelligent; to maintain the latter, were well nigh acknowledging a God. To escape from this dilemma, and in so escaping, not to admit an incorporeal being, they asserted a kind of mechanical operation, which belonged

<sup>1</sup> It is plain to any one that hath had the least acquaintance with Plato’s philosophy, that the whole scope and drift of it is to raise up men’s minds from sense to a belief of incorporeal things, as the most excellent.—*Cudworth’s Intellectual System*, &c. chap. i. p. 19.

to the inanimate creation ; thus “ professing themselves to be wise they became fools ;” but they laid the foundation of the doctrine of incorporeal agency in spite of themselves. This was taken up by the academic philosophers, at the head of whom, stands Plato ; but as he differed only a little from Aristotle on this subject, we may consider the theology of these two astonishing men as one system. Socrates had left them in possession of some sublime truths, which he might have inherited from the sages of more remote antiquity. He had taught at Athens that God is One—perfect in Himself—immutable, the author of the existence, and the welfare of every creature<sup>1</sup> ; that God, not chance, made the world and all living creatures<sup>2</sup> ; but even in the mind of this man, who gave his life for his religious opinions, we have to deplore both ignorance and superstition. He said, he knew what God was not ; but what he was, he was ignorant of ! He did not even know that God was “ a rewarder of them that diligently seek him :” he taught, agreeably to the Pythian oracle, that the gods were to be worshipped according to the law of the city wherein a man lives, and

<sup>1</sup> Plato in *Phædon*. tom. i. p. 78, edit. Hen. Stephan. A. 1578, in folio.

<sup>2</sup> *Idem* in *Timæo*, p. 28—32.

he thought them superstitious and vain who did otherwise <sup>1</sup>. I am aware that this accommodating system is very congenial to the present state of the civilized world, and to that boasted liberality, which, whilst knowing God, glorifies him not as God ; but I need not here stay to show you this is not to be the principle of Christian worship. Of the “ religious Socrates,” who is sometimes profanely compared with the founder of our holy religion, I shall merely observe, that in his best words, he incurs the censure of the apostle, along with the rest <sup>2</sup>, “ that they changed the glory of the incorruptible God to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” But to return to the academical doctrine.

I remarked that Plato and his school (observing perhaps the perplexity in which the materialists were held) applied themselves more

<sup>1</sup> *Xenophon Memorab.* lib. iv. p. 803, *edit. Lutet. Paris.* 1625, *in folio*, and *Conf. id.* p. 722.

<sup>2</sup> Mr. Gibbon has insinuated, in his usual manner, that the philosopher allowed no such repining words to escape his lips as those of the dying Jesus, “ my God, my God,” &c. *See Decline and Fall.* His comparison, somewhat profane, does not surprise us ; but Dr. Butler’s parallel between Christ and Socrates, if it be truly reported, adds indecency. *See Christian Observer*, vol. xi. p. 44. The philosopher’s last words were really these—O Crito, I owe Æsculapius a cock, pay it—do not neglect ; it shall be done, says Crito.—*Plato in Phædon.* vers. finem.

especially to the study of incorporeal substances, and although some of their expressions are remarkable for their similarity to the Mosaic writings, the result of their intense study and superior intellect seems to have been this, that God was the soul of the universe. I do not say that a more favourable conclusion might not be drawn from many passages in the writings of Plato and Aristotle ; but the poet Virgil, who evidently reproduces the sum of the Platonic and Peripatetic theology, exhibits the Deity as the Divine Spirit which is diffused through the whole of nature<sup>1</sup>. But if it were possible to assign to a god of this description the properties of power and ubiquity, it would be impossible to clothe him with any of those moral attributes, which have an influence on men as responsible agents ; and yet, if any one were required to produce the most striking examples of unassisted reason attempting to search out “the things of God,” he would doubtless bring forward Plato and Aristotle. We have, however, something to interpose here, with reference to the enlightened doctrines of the Platonic and Peripatetic schools. Plato, as we are certified by Josephus, obtained much of his theological knowledge from the

<sup>1</sup> . . . . . totamque infusa per artus

Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore miscet.

*Æneid.* vi. 724.

writings of Moses. “What is Plato,” observes Numenius, “but Moses speaking Greek<sup>1</sup>?” The following passages to that effect are remarkable:—“The Eternal Being created the world; and when this image of the eternal gods had begun to exist, and have motion, God, pleased with the works of His hands, wished to make it still more like the original pattern, and to assign it something of the imperishable nature; but since creation could not altogether resemble the Eternal Mind, He made a moveable image of eternity, and keeping for Himself the indivisible duration, He gave us the divisible emblem which we call time—days, nights, months, and years; those fleeting portions of mortal life.” “We are wrong,” observes this same philosopher, “in speaking of the Divine Essence, to say, *it was—it shall be*; these forms of time do not suit Eternity. *It is*; this is its attribute<sup>2</sup>.” If we compare these sentences with the writings of Moses, it can be no longer doubted from what source Plato

<sup>1</sup> See this subject discussed in *Brucker's Hist. Critica Philosoph.* tom. i. p. 635, *edit. Lipsiæ*, 1742; and Stanley, *Hist. of Philosophy*, p. 159, *edit. London*, 1701.

<sup>2</sup> Ταῦτα δὲ πάντα μέρος χρόνου, καὶ τὸ, τ' ἦν, τὸ, τ' ἔσται, χρόνου γεγονότος εἶδη, φέροντες λανθάνομεν ἐπὶ τὴν αἰδίων οὐσίαν, οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγομεν γὰρ ὅτι ὥς ἦν, ἔστι τε καὶ ἔσται· τῇ δὲ τὸ ἔστι μόνον, κατὰ τὸν ἀληθῆ λόγον, προσήκει.—*Platon. Timæus*, p. 37, tom. iii. in *edit. Stephan.* 1587.

derived his sublime knowledge—"God created the heavens and the earth." "He saw that it was very good." "He called the evening and the morning the first day" or portion of time. "I am that I am," &c. All these inspired expressions seem to have been adopted by the philosopher, so then whatever argument the rationalist may wish to draw from the striking examples of Plato or Aristotle, he is bound to add,—this *however they derived from another source* <sup>1</sup>. It is in this manner we may account for the Platonic Trinity. Having observed the plurality of the Divine name, and seeing that the Deity spake on earth to his servant Moses in a language implying such plurality, Plato concluded that in the essence of the Deity there were more persons than one; for he read of one being sent, and another sending, and yet co-operating for the same end, and with an equality of Divine powers. He received, no doubt, much confirmation of his view from the Jewish Trinity or

<sup>1</sup> Monsieur Champollion, in his Introductory Discourse on Archæology, at the French College, says, "L'école Platonicienne n'est que l'Égyptianisme sorti des sanctuaires de Sais et la vieille secte Pythagoricienne propagea des théories psychologiques développées dans les peintures et les légendes sacrées qui décoraient les tombeaux des rois de Thèbes au fond de la vallée déserte de Bibanel Molouk." We consider this as absolutely leading us only nearer to Moses.



the ancient Cabala, and he made so near an approach to the Christian doctrine, that his three persons, or hypostases, are never by him accounted as created beings, but are set above all creatures <sup>1</sup>. In short, Plato, when properly understood in his three hypostases, which make up his Godhead or entire divinity, knew the nature of the true God so far, that he had concentrated and personified infinite goodness, infinite wisdom, and infinite vital energy in the fountain of his divinity. These were the three essences of his Trinity: so that if he and his followers, knowing thus much of God, did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful, they were without excuse.

From the nature and existence of a God, we pass on to a superintending Providence in human affairs: a doctrine which, as it brings the Deity into more immediate relation with man, goes far beyond the other as an article of belief. In this Aristotle betrays much scepticism. If there be any care, he observes, taken of human affairs by the gods (as it *seems* there is) it is also deducible that they take pleasure in that which is good, and bears the nearest

<sup>1</sup> See *Bishop Horsley's Letters to Dr. Priestley*, Let. xiii. p. 247, and consult *Cudworth on Atheism*, &c. chap. iv. p. 576, edit. London, 1678, in folio.

affinity to themselves ; and this is intelligence, that they recompense those who love and honour it the most, as persons who take care of that which is dear to them, doing justly and honestly<sup>1</sup>. How much the coldness and scepticism of this passage (although remarkable) would suffer by a comparison with the confidence of the Christian in the revealed Word, I need not stop to point out ; and yet, had this great man glorified the Supreme Being according to his light and knowledge, there was room for his thanksgiving and praise ; for independently of the truths glanced at in the above passage, he established the leading truth, that there was some being, eternal, self-existent, and that can never fade away, a perfect mind or intelligence<sup>2</sup>, which sublime notion of the Deity was adopted by many of the succeeding philosophers. We have just been assuming the fact, that some light borrowed from the Mosaic records partially shone in the Grecian academy.

<sup>1</sup> *Aristot. Ethic. ad Nicomach.* lib. x. cap. 7. 9. This is the only instance, I believe, wherein Aristotle expresses any kind of belief in a providence ; and here he speaks of the gods or intelligences, which has nothing to do with the doctrine of a Divine Providence. Plato does use the expression, Θεου προνοια, (Divine Providence) indeed he is the author of it.

<sup>2</sup> *Arist. Physic.* lib. viii. cap. 6, 7. 10.

In drawing our conclusions with this fact in view, the advantage of Divine revelation is at once acknowledged, without invalidating the arguments of the *insufficiency* of human reason. But now let us resume the more particular feature of our argument, and suppose these great men to have received no such auxiliary light, but to have arrived at their conclusions by the unassisted powers of reason. Then it must be confessed, that in nothing has the Providence of God been more manifest than in this : that these wise and acute philosophers, following the dictates of their own reason, and without being influenced by any written word of revelation or any prejudice, should discover a Trinity of Persons or Hypostases in the Godhead, and so prepare the way for the reception of the Christian doctrine, three Persons in one God ; and we conceive this to be a complete answer to those fastidious rationalists who talk of the doctrine of the Trinity as being contrary to reason ; for by the most sublime exercise of reason that the human mind uninfluenced ever accomplished, this very doctrine was the result, and even formed the ground-work of the most rational system of pagan theology and morality.

We are not anxious to pursue a subject of this nature further than may be thought sufficient to illustrate the truth of St. Paul's position ;

already we have seen that, independently of the doctrine of the Unity of God, and a Providence exercised over all creation, and over man in particular, it was concluded that there must be a Divine Intelligence which was generated by Infinite Goodness operating on itself: and then again that there must be a creative spirit, which proceeding from goodness and intelligence conjointly, performed its wonderful operations on matter and spirit in the energy of Divine love: and in this manner it was conceived the visible things of creation were formed, as if the very Spirit of God had been seen moving upon the face of the waters: so that the Eternal Power and Divinity, or Godhead, was really known and set forth to the world by the great minds of Plato and Aristotle. But although they were thus without excuse, there was not that confidence which enabled them to stay their minds on the God they professed to believe. And if at one time they seemed thus to elevate the dignity of human reason, at another they plunged it again in all the folly of unbelief, and their foolish heart was darkened; the light of truth seemed to shine through their minds, but not in them, and because they had no “sure word of prophecy,” nor any promise of “better things to come,” they did but wander from their lofty conceptions to objects of the sense, until

they worshipped all the host of heaven, “and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man,” which is the second position of the apostle we intend briefly to maintain.

The sum and substance of Aristotle’s creed is contained in the following words. It has been a tradition of very remote antiquity that the heavenly bodies were gods, independently of the Divinity which contains the whole of nature ; but all the rest was fabulously ingrafted upon this, for the persuasion of the multitude, and for furthering the ends of legislature and policy : such, for instance, as that these gods were of human likeness, and resembling other living animals, and other such things as are the natural consequences of these fables<sup>1</sup>. The philosopher did not of course believe the things which he considered as only invented for the vulgar credulity, but he believed the two first articles. The word by which he expresses the Godhead or Supreme Being [*το θεον*] which contains the whole of nature, is the expression used by St. Paul, when he declares, that from the foundation of the world the Eternal Power and Godhead [*θειοτης*] was known from the visible creation. And this is a remarkable con-

<sup>1</sup> Aristot. *Metaphysic.* lib. xiv. cap. 8.

firmation of the apostle's assertion ; for Aristotle says, it was an article of faith delivered down from very remote antiquity<sup>1</sup>. But in the second article of his creed, he incurs the censure which belonged to all those who are charged with worshipping all the host of heaven, because he believes "the sun and the moon and the stars which God hath ordained" to be themselves gods : and if gods, then, for him, objects of worship. It is true he sometimes explained those heavenly bodies to be so many immoveable intelligences ; but to place wisdom in the stars, or to suppose them actuated by an incorporeal substance, was only the grossest idolatry upon a larger scale ; for whether it be a graven image or a heavenly body which becomes the object of such veneration, the idolatry may differ in degree, but in principle it is the same ; and if it were possible to suppose the incorporeal substance apart from the gross material, to make it an object of worship were perhaps more refined but not the less idolatry ; "for the Lord our God is a jealous God" and will not give his glory unto another. And whether it be a blessed spirit or a glorious luminary, which are

<sup>1</sup> Cudworth has shown that in all the leading systems of Polytheism there was a *θεῖον*, or Supreme Deity, taught as being independent of the subordinate gods. *Intellectual System*, p. 255.

both equally the created works of His hands, it can have no more title to adoration than the thunder-bolt and lightning, *i. e.* they are all but visible specimens of His Omnipotence and Wisdom. And behold, brethren, where this doctrine of inferior deities or intelligences ended ! it ended in the atheism of Epicurus, and the catalogue of vices which the apostle Paul enumerates to the Romans ; for when instead of the great first Cause a number of inferior causes were alleged <sup>1</sup>, and every season had its god, and every element its deity, and every vice as well as virtue its patron, then the Supreme Being was lost in the clouds of gross incense, and thus “they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” [And for this cause, for this perversion of the truth they knew, for this multiplied number of inferior beings to whom they addressed their prayers, in that they seldom or never acknowledged the great first Cause, “God gave them over to a reprobate mind.”]

The most learned and virtuous of the heathen philosophers, such as Plato and Aristotle, do not incur the whole of the charge brought against

<sup>1</sup> God being *one* has thus received many names, according to the variety of effects of which he is the cause. *Aristot. de Mund.* 6, 7.

the idolatrous world : we would not apply to them more than they deserve, but only this : that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful ; but to others, by whom their doctrines were suffered to degenerate, more especially to the priests and ministers of their religion, the charge is applicable in its fullest extent ; for [“many of their gods were nothing else but dead men or the souls of men deceased, called by the Greeks, Heroes, and by the Latins, Manes,”] and thus “they changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man.”

It would lead us too far into a subject not the most profitable, were I to attempt to trace the degeneracy of pagan theology, the deifying of the several parts of nature, and the personating of the human faculties and passions. We have already seen how the Eternal Power and Godhead was known and acknowledged by the wisest of the heathen : how, again, in professing themselves to be wise, or in the pride of their reason, they became fools : so that we shall be content with now merely stating, that however any one may feel disposed to admire and exalt this light or knowledge, it had so transitory an influence over the human mind, that it served but to indicate the path which led to error and



corruption, and then became extinct. All the discoveries, which so highly exalted human reason, ended in the grossest idolatry, and that, becoming the established worship, produced all the vices which are so justly charged upon the heathen world by St. Paul : all that the human mind could invent, was of no effect in “turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just :” all the sublime reasoning of a Plato or an Aristotle, which then, and ever since, has captivated the philosophical mind, was but as water spilt upon the ground, neither did it produce any permanent good in the moral world. The simple reason was this, that no one had “*spoken from heaven,*” there wanted the divine sanction which belongs only to revelation. And however the discoveries of the natural mind might sometimes coincide with God’s truth, they wanted that very stamp upon them which alone could have recommended them to universal acceptance, viz. the stamp of Divine authority. Now “this is a true saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,” which is the sum and substance of the Christian revelation.

If it be true, as the apostle asserts, and as we have abundantly shown, that the unity of God was a doctrine received from the beginning of time, and examined and approved by some of

the most distinguished sages : if it be equally true that this sublime truth was obscured and mingled with the alloy of the corrupt imaginations of the heart of man, and that not partially ; but so generally, that all knowledge of the true God gradually disappeared from the heathen world : and if it be also true, as we shall afterwards show, that even the Jews, who were so highly favoured by special missions from heaven, returned to the sin of idolatry and “made them golden calves in Bethel,” and “provoked the Lord to anger” by their false worship ; then it is clear that there is a tendency in the human mind to idolatrous worship, since, under all circumstances, history informs us such has been the case. A practice so universal, and seemingly so congenial to the natural mind, ought certainly to be accounted for : there must be some reason to be assigned why men, instead of considering God as a spirit, and so worshipping him in spirit and in truth, have had recourse to those exterior helps which end in dishonouring his holy name. What is more obvious than the cause of this ? To contemplate the Deity as a pure spirit, and to elevate the powers of the soul to the study of His glorious attributes, where all is matter of faith and not of sight, is a work too great for the human mind, before it be purified and fashioned anew by the Spirit of God, and enlightened by

His Holy Word. As the mind becomes more gross and sensual : as ignorance and sin make their way in every faculty thereof, so hath it recourse to objects of sense for relief, and even in the consciousness of its necessities it dare not, neither can it elevate itself in prayer to the Almighty Parent of all : it must thus have excitements, and it must thus have an object of sense which will diminish the intensity of thought, and recall by the instrumentality of the eye or ear, the wanderings of the soul, and therefore it substitutes for the Highest, inferior objects of adoration. If this were all, and by this the great end could be effected, although we might doubt the purity of the mind, as most assuredly we should doubt its vigour, still the honour of God is not much compromised, because it is clearly understood that this object of sense, this exterior help, is only meant to conduct the mind to the great first Cause. But this was just the first step to that degeneracy into which the Gentile worship fell, whence it was soon found, that to inculcate so refined a sentiment upon the minds of the vulgar, as that the inferior deities, or representations of them, were only designed to conduct the mind in the plenitude of devotion to the supreme God, was more difficult than to direct the worshipper at once to the Deity Himself.

The matter, therefore, was either compromised by the philosopher, who lowered the standard of worship to the gross conception of the multitude; or else it was all declared to be a fable, and too high for human reason to attain,—the result of the one was the most degrading superstition—of the other, atheism. But, as we have seen, from the words of Aristotle, that the fabulous deities, and all the circumstances of a pompous worship, were well adapted to serve the ends of legislation and policy, so did the philosopher and the magistrate, considering “all religion as equally true or false, or equally useful,” providing it accorded with the conceptions of the people, attracted their admiration, or inspired their devotion, dignify the idolatry by their sanction, while they smiled at the vulgar credulity. Thus they, knowing or having the power to know God, glorified him not as God; whereas the multitude completely changed the glory of God into a lie. The philosopher, who had any regard for wisdom and truth, would have stemmed the torrent, ere it carried away every vestige of good sense and virtue; he would no doubt have stopped short at the first step to idolatry, and said “so far it is expedient;” but the ignorant multitude knew nothing of his discriminations, and he had received no oracles of truth whereby to show

them the great sin and danger of an idolatrous worship.

From all these things, my brethren, we perceive the great danger of departing from first principles, and the still greater one of adapting religion to the passions and to the natural conceptions of men, that is, to corruption and error. When ye pray, therefore, consider first the nature of that Being to whom and the means by which all your petitions are to be addressed [take heed not only to the first commandment, but let the second also be impressed upon your minds<sup>1</sup>.] His nature and attributes are now clearly revealed in such a light as to throw back all the discoveries of the most refined reason into comparative obscurity. We know now that God is an infinitely holy and just Being, a pure Spirit dwelling in light inaccessible from all eternity, Who delighteth in truth, holiness, and justice, which the creatures He has formed are capable of possessing in some degree. All things in creation are the works of His hands ; and He taketh care of all this lower

<sup>1</sup> In Bellarmine's Catechism, duly sanctioned, and in common use at Rome, the commandments run thus :—

I. Io sono il Signore Iddio tuo non avrai altro Dio avanti di me.

II. Non Pigliare il Nome di Dio in vano.

III. Ricordati di sanctificare le Feste, &c.

world contains, so that not even a sparrow falls to the ground without his knowledge ; He clotheth the grass of the field, and He arrayeth the lily in more than Solomon's glory ; there is nothing upon earth too little for His superintending providence to watch over, nor any thing in the heaven above too vast for His infinite power and wisdom to control ; He hath stretched out the heavens like a curtain, and hath placed the stars in their spheres ; He hath touched them all with the finger of His omnipotence, and they run their course at His command. May be He hath peopled worlds and worlds unknown to us ; and when we ascend up into the place where He manifesteth all His glory, we shall see other things than these which now call forth our limited admiration. Such is a mere glance at the character of that God with whom we have to do : all these His Attributes He hath revealed in and by the person of His only Son, who is the express image of His glory ; and it is just this great revelation of which we are anxious at this season to enhance the value ; for without it ye see, brethren, we might have attained to the mental stature of a Plato or an Aristotle ; but we could never have comprehended with all saints what is the extent of the love of God which passeth knowledge. Now however, that it hath pleased Him to speak unto

us by His Son, and to reveal His nature, and the relation in which He chooses to stand with men ; we are brought out of darkness into marvellous light, if so be that we close not our eyes to the brightness thereof. “ Our Father which art in heaven ” is the sublime address which the Christian is taught to present at the throne of grace : by the mediator Christ Jesus, Who taught and revealed all we know of God, the Christian is to approach Him, and he needeth no exterior help, if his mind be fixed upon his Saviour, for if any help be needed, there is this one offered, “ The Spirit of God helpeth our infirmities with groanings that cannot be uttered.”

When ye pray therefore, brethren, “ use not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think they shall be heard for their much speaking,” [neither be ye captivated with the pomp of a vain worship, which turneth the mind from the Creator to the creature, and changeth the truth of God into a lie.] The ears of the Lord of Hosts are ever open to the prayers of His people, and your God knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him. Let no objects of sense intrude upon your devotion, nor any unworthy notions of that God ye address, worshipping Him with men’s hands as though He needed any thing ! “ Ye ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto silver or gold, the work of men’s

hands,” or that any representation of him is necessary or even expedient in prayer. “ Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen ;” “ be ye not subject to ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men ; which things have indeed a shew of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body ;” but are altogether destitute of the real spirit of Christian prayer. “ But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.” And this, my brethren, is the God of the Christians, and this is the manner in which He is to be worshipped, in spirit and in truth.



## LECTURE II.

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### HEATHEN MORALITY, ITS PRINCIPLES AND FINAL RESULTS.

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ROMANS ii. 14, 15.

*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law ; these having not the law, are a law unto themselves : which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excusing one another.*

IN my last lecture I endeavoured to ascertain the degree of light and knowledge which it was possible to arrive at, with regard to the nature of God, and the manner in which He ought to be worshipped, according to the powers of human reason, as exemplified in the theology of heathen philosophers. We were then led to conclude, that unassisted reason was an insufficient guide in a subject so far beyond the reach of its utmost efforts, and hence the necessity of a divine re-

velation. I shall now inquire, as I proposed, into their system of ethics, especially their discoveries in the relative and social duties of life, upon what principles the practice of virtue was generally enforced, and how their moral lessons operated on the general good of mankind.

It is necessary to cultivate the practice of many virtues for the simple maintenance of social order, nor is it less indispensable to pursue a certain course of morality in order to ensure some tolerable share of personal welfare : and it is evident that a principle of self-preservation, amounting to something more than instinct, will carry a community or an individual to such a degree of morality as this ; hence we may also discern that many excellent things will come within the compass of that system which we may call the law of nature. We cannot, therefore, be surprised to find in the writings of those wise men, who never knew any other law, specimens of the purest morality, nor in their lives, examples of praiseworthy virtues ; nor is it impossible that several amongst them might even surpass some of us, who, although favoured with an exemplification of the Divine law, despise and daily transgress it. But partial contrasts like these, and a cursory view of accidental results, will not affect the general inquiry we are now about to institute ; for we have to look to the general issue and to

see how those moral lessons operated in promoting the welfare of mankind.

It is not so much upon practical results that men differ, as it is upon the means and principles of arriving at them: hence, wherever virtue is found, it receives the approbation of mankind, who are not usually concerned in examining too closely the motive which has produced it. So long, for instance, as the outward moral duties of life are decently discharged, we are satisfied upon the principle which it may be supposed dictates them, and it is only when these are wanting that we begin to search for the radical cause of such deficiency. This holds equally true of an individual and of a community at large; wherever much vice prevails we hesitate not to ascend to real causes, and when we find them in institutions, whether political or religious, we conclude, that until certain defects be remedied in the system, it will be in vain to expect any more favourable results. That which is true of other things, must in this view be equally true in the matter of religion: admitting the universal depravity of mankind, or in less evangelical terms, the general prevalence of evil, and that certain portions of the multitude are in a better moral state than the rest, we can never rest satisfied, without inquiring into the real causes of the difference, and we might

pronounce, *à priori*, that system to be the best which produces the greatest quantity of happiness and prosperity in a people ; but all this concludes with great force against those who pretend to be indifferent to principle in religion, and who talk of “ modes of faith ” as things of no consequence<sup>1</sup> ; for the fact is, that in this principle of religious creed generally consists the difference in the human condition here below, without referring to a world to come. We have already seen the source of all the immorality of the heathen world, “ they knew not God ; ” that is, they had no fit object of worship : and secondly, they “ glorified him not as God ; ” that is, they adopted wrong and unworthy means of worshipping Him. Two evils arose out of these things, on the one hand infidelity, and superstition on the other ; but the same evils will spring up again from the same causes, and therefore, even now that God has been revealed in his Word, if He be not worshipped as a Self-existent pure Spirit, clothed with moral attributes and

<sup>1</sup> The most prevalent idea of religion amongst the educated classes on the Continent is, that all religion is a mere sentiment, and whether in the Jew, Turk, Hindoo, or Christian (each one according to his manner) it is all the same ; that is to say, among the educated classes on the Continent, generally speaking, there is no religious *principle*. Is this so worthy the emulation of England ?

perfections, practical atheism must be the consequence : and again, if there be too much ceremony in His worship, for that is the meaning of superstition, *i.e.* if He be not worshipped properly, in spirit and in truth ; “ but by men’s hands, as though he needed any thing ; ” by the fat of rams, and by incense, and endless ceremonies, the result must be an established superstition. Now both these evils are the mortal enemies of truth and morality, and it would perhaps be difficult to decide whether infidelity or superstition have caused most misery to the human race. The morality of the heathen world, therefore, being subjected to both these dæmons of mental depravity, necessarily lost whatever might have been at first dictated by the law of Nature, until, as the apostle saith, “ God gave them over to a reprobate mind : ” but the grand cause was the DEFECT IN KNOWLEDGE of God and His truth.

According to St. Paul’s view, as it stands exposed in the verse placed at the head of our lecture, there is an universal law of nature distinct from that law which may more properly be called divine, and very far beneath the pure standard of the Gospel. The natural conscience is in unison with that law, and taketh cognizance of it in its observance or infringement, “ their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing, or else excus-

ing one another." When this is the only light vouchsafed to the creature, he is to be judged by it; if he do by nature the things contained in that law, he may be supposed to meet with favour at the hands of God, without supposing him to have the Christian's reward; or, perhaps, if such an one there be, as were Cornelius or some others of whom we read, he may not be left without a special visitation of God's grace. This might be the case with some virtuous heathens; but at all events there is nothing in this supposition at variance with the uncovenanted mercy of God, neither should the zealous Christian take alarm at such an assumption; for it by no means invades his privileges, nor renders his labours in extending the kingdom of Christ less necessary. On the contrary, if we could suppose the whole heathen world to be in the condition of Cornelius previously to his receiving the Gospel, it would be an additional reason for endeavouring to impart to them the knowledge of Christ and his salvation.

"By the law," says the great apostle, "is the knowledge of sin;" and again, "where there is no law, there is no transgression;" "nay, I had not known lust, says he, unless the law had said, thou shalt not covet." From these profound sentences we deduce, that where that law, to which he alludes, and by which he means the

moral law, as delivered by Moses, does not exist, there can be no knowledge of sin by the transgression of it ; and further, there can, properly speaking, be no transgression ; for no man can transgress that which is not forbidden : but still, the same apostle says, the heathen were without excuse, because, although they had no knowledge of what was sin by the application of the moral law, they had that knowledge, as far as the law of nature held it up to them ; and their condemnation, which was general, was not in what they did not know, but in their ignorance of that which they might have known, and their neglect of what they knew. In connexion with these observations, the following deductions, in a review of our subject, may be made.

1. Seeing that many heathen philosophers uttered excellent words, and such as sometimes agree with the Christian morality, there is a proof that the light of nature alone, if duly followed, apprehendeth something of God's law.

2. That inasmuch as their doctrine had no influence over men's minds, but in the end God gave them up to a reprobate mind, because they followed not that to which their consciences bore witness, it may be inferred that this light of nature, however brilliant, was of itself insufficient, and the necessity of a revelation from heaven manifest.

3. The cause of this insufficiency did not consist in their disapprobation of moral goodness when it was apparent, but in the principles and motives on which it was inculcated : and hence the necessity of Christian doctrine as well as Christian practice.

Among the precepts of the seven sages, as they are called, collected by Sosiades<sup>1</sup>, we have some which show the work of the law written on the mind, as for instance,—Follow God, relieve thy friends, practise generosity, curb thy tongue : on the other hand, we have some which betray the corruption of human nature, such as, —Worship the gods, revenge thyself upon thine enemies, repel injury, what thou joyest in quit not, and such like. From the age of Thales the Milesian to that of Socrates (about a period of 300 years), we seek in vain for improvement in morality ; but when the Ionic philosophers had exhausted their stock by subtle refinements<sup>2</sup>, we find Socrates introducing a better system.

<sup>1</sup> See *Stanley's History of Philosophy*, &c. part i. p. 54. chiefly extracted from Laertius and Stobæus.

<sup>2</sup> The Ionic sect began with Anaximander, the disciple of Thales, and ended with Archelaus. The whole stock of morality in this school I find very slender ; it hardly seems (to use a common phrase) “to have been in their line.” Stobæus has collected some sentences of Anaximenes. *Vide Serm. CCLXIX.* p. 870. which shows the folly of “*Philosophy, falsely so called.*”



He considered that of all things which man can call his own, the soul is the most important: that He who purifies his soul from vice, is the only happy man, and that the means for effecting this is wisdom, &c.<sup>1</sup> It is of little consequence that we could select from the writings of this great master of heathen morality many sentences which would invalidate this eulogium. He died, it is supposed, a martyr to the cause of truth, as far as his conscience bore him witness. It might seem ungenerous to refuse him the palm; and, perhaps, it was only the malice of his enemies which prompted them to accuse him of enormous vices. But as the instance stands recorded in the monuments of letters, it proves the Apostle's position, that having but a heathen's light, the work of the law was exhibited as written on his mind. Whether he did by nature the things contained in the law, God will judge.

The Ionic philosophy soon degenerated into

<sup>1</sup> Such were the sentiments of Socrates, as Libanius states them (*Declamatio* XXIX. *Socrat. Apolog.* p. 639, tom. i. edit. Parisiis, 1606, in fol.) and they are *generally* in harmony with his moral sentences, preserved by Plato and Xenophon. Cicero speaks still more highly of him as a teacher of morality. "Socrates autem primus philosophiam evocavit e cœlo et in urbibus collocavit, et in domos etiam introduxit, et coegit de vitâ et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quærere." *Tusculan. Quæst.* lib. v. cap. 4.

those sects which are enumerated by Panætius, and which were of very short duration<sup>1</sup>. The Cyrenaic sect, and others, at the head of which stands Aristippus, asserted bodily pleasure to be the ultimate end, and this they pretended was manifest, because from our earliest infancy, without any instruction from others, we seek nothing else. In this, by the way, we observe a remarkable though perverted testimony to the revealed doctrine, “that every imagination of the heart of man is only evil continually :” that “the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

The pleasures of the body, say these unholy teachers, are much better than those of the soul, and the pains or sorrows thereof much worse<sup>2</sup>. It is true these sentiments are disapproved of by Cicero and many other moralists ; but the more refined system of Epicurus, which was so generally adopted by the men of Rome, goes not be-

<sup>1</sup> From the Socratic school descended these sects. The Cyrenaic, Megaric, Eliac, Eretriac. Of the two former, Aristippus and Euclid (not the mathematician) were the respective leaders : of the two latter, Phædo and Menedemus ; on which the learned reader may consult, *Bruck. Hist. Critic. Philosoph.* Pars ii. lib. ii. cap. 3. p. 584. tom. i.

<sup>2</sup> Atque ab Aristippo Cyrenaici atque Anicerii Philosophi nominati omne bonum in voluptate posuerunt, virtutemque censuerunt *ob eam rem* laudandam, quòd efficiens esset voluptates. *Cic. de Officiis*, lib. ii. cap. 33.

yond this degenerated school of Socrates in *purity of principle*. Of the philosophers of these sects, Hegesias, with great eloquence, justified suicide<sup>1</sup>: and Bion commended sensuality, when any one made it his choice: it appears then we advance not far in the history of Ethics before our two first propositions are almost established. They first show the work of the law written on their hearts; but because they do not by nature the things contained in the law, they are given over to a reprobate mind. The brightest ornament, and the most unsullied example of the law of nature, is yet, however, to be viewed in Plato. This great man had all the advantages of the morality of Socrates, and must have been disgusted with the rapid degeneracy of some of his followers, and if, as we said on a former occasion, he had access to the law of Moses, it will be an additional reason for the greater purity of his sentiments; but if, notwithstanding, they are still deficient in purity, it proves more than any thing else, the insufficiency of natural light and knowledge. Now Plato said, that to drink to intoxication was not allowable at any time, *except* upon the festival of that god who gives the wine! “Be ye not drunk with wine (says St. Paul) wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit”—this by way of contrast. Again this philosopher holds

<sup>1</sup> *Cic. Tusculan. Quæstion.* lib. i. cap. 34.

it lawful, and even recommends governors, to make use of falsehoods, both towards enemies and citizens, whenever it may be convenient: not so the apostle,—“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.” When Plato observed the inhabitants of Agrigentum luxurious in feasting, “These people,” said he, “eat as if they were to die instantly<sup>1</sup>.” What then? That heathen sentiment, the most destructive of all inward purity, was sanctioned in principle by the divine Plato! “Let us eat and drink for to-morrow we die.” Talk no more so exceeding proudly, O ye who extol the natural power of man; it is time to do homage to the word of Revelation, for Plato was a teacher of immorality without it, yea, even when he would not be so<sup>2</sup>! But to proceed:—

<sup>1</sup> These sentences of Plato are chiefly to be found in Diogenes Laertius, the English reader may see *Stanley's Hist. of Philosophy*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> In passing immediately to the Cynic sect, I omit to notice the immediate successors of Plato, and the Peripatetic philosophers; they scarcely touch the subject of Ethics. The school instituted by Arcesilaus, called the second or minor academy, adopted the creed of Hesiod, “The gods have concealed all knowledge from men;” but yet they held Plato’s doctrines. They did not, like the Sceptics, take away true or false from things, or hold that both were indifferent, and might equally be defended by reason! the Peripatetic school degenerated in Strato, who attributed all divine power to nature.

The Cynic sect was instituted by Antisthenes, who was followed by Diogenes, and others of more obscure fame; of these it may be said, that “they trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” From the Cynics, however, the sect of the Stoics had its origin, of which Zeno was the author, and here we arrive at some better sentiments. Neither is it possible, brethren, at any time so to extinguish the light of nature, as that it shall never re-appear; for although you may pull down the branch of the tree, and incline it ingloriously to the earth, still will it spring up again, and point its blooming honours to the sky, whenever the hand which forces it relaxes its grasp. Let us hear for a moment the Stoics. They said, that virtue is in itself virtue, and not for expectation, or dread of any thing external: it is desirable in itself: for which reason, when we do any thing amiss, we are ashamed, knowing that only to be good which is honest. Virtue is therefore sufficient of itself to gain happiness: so at least say, Zeno, Chrysippus, and others; but we find Panætius and Posidonius denying this, and teaching, that it requires health, strength, and the good things of this life, independent of virtue, to gain happiness. No sooner therefore do we again find some better sentiment, than it is clouded with sensuality. Upon this

Epicurus refined again, and although we might detect many shades of difference in the morality of the Greek sects, they will all, as far as any principle is concerned, centre in the Epicurean school, which may be considered, after all, as the established religion of Pagan Rome. Epicurus, no doubt, taught a refined indulgence, which, if followed up, ensured an absolute temperance and continency : and all those who had any pretensions to wisdom, spake of what was honest and praiseworthy in conformity with his views : they followed the law of nature (I speak of the wisest and best of them, who were but few in number,) upon the principle of more enlarged enjoyment : justice was taught and recommended, because it was a bond of social union. Nevertheless we find Theodorus declaring, that a wise man might, upon a proper occasion, commit theft, adultery, and sacrilege, for that none of those things were disgraceful in themselves, if that opinion of them, which was agreed upon for the sake of restraining fools, were taken away. Truth, they further taught, was highly desirable because it was useful ; nevertheless, we read in some of their writings, that a man may speak falsely, provided he select a fitting or a needful season. So much for their social duties of life : this was their public virtue ; but with regard to

their morals of a more private nature,—excess was to be avoided in every thing, because it clogged the soul with vice and pollution, gave cause for much uneasiness, and ended in misery. Personal virtue was therefore highly desirable, because in that consisted the most refined happiness. In short, it is in vain to search for a higher principle than that of self, in all the virtue of the heathen world<sup>1</sup>. This accounts for the absence of those excellent virtues inculcated by our religion, such as doing good to others, and giving to those that need, not for the sake of removing inconvenience from our sight, but for the sake of “Him who loved us, and gave Himself for us.” But you will easily perceive, brethren, that upon the heathen principle of egotism, you might have a man of soberness, temperance, and chastity: in truth, we have many such in our own age upon the epicurean or stoical principle, and upon no other. It was at Athens, as we read, where Paul encountered some philosophers of those two sects, who mocked, and said they would hear him

<sup>1</sup> The morality and physics of the Epicurean school may be found in Lucian, in Catullus, and other poets of that class; and will be familiar to every reader of Horace. I forbear to make any further references in illustration of the text; but the moral treatises of Cicero, if read in a proper spirit, will not fail to enhance the value of the code of Christianity.

again when he preached unto them Jesus and the resurrection.

It is not my intention to bring before you, in the course of these lectures, more of “the wisdom of the Greeks” than is necessary for establishing our positions, which we desire to maintain for a more important purpose; we shall, therefore, leave this wide field of heathen morality, and come to some general application.

If then it appear that there was a law of nature, written in the hearts of the heathen, which, if they had followed, would, as St. Paul saith, have become the standard of their judgment, the justice of God is manifest; but if, on the other hand, they became “vain in their imaginations, and worked all uncleanness with greediness,” thereby extinguishing the light which glimmered, however faintly, in their consciences, the condemnation of the world is just. “Let then God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, that thou mightest be justified in thy saying, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.” The result of all this is, that either the world must perish, or God must again exert His power, and devise a remedy for the restoration of that corrupt nature, which in its own strength had so miserably failed. Two things were necessary, the first was to be an act of universal application, so that all the guilty world might at once



be lifted up from the depths of perdition to the hope of salvation. “God therefore so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,” which is the substance of Divine revelation. The second act was to be, more properly speaking, of a moral nature, viz. a work on the heart of man, by infusing into it a pure principle to which he had hitherto been a stranger; for it would not have been enough to have excited in the fallen man the hope of salvation, unless also his spiritual condition had been so changed, as to have enabled him, with the new powers conferred, both to apprehend and lay hold on it. The work of the new covenant therefore is this, “I will put my laws into their hearts, and write them on their minds,” and whatever there may be of virtue after this, it is clearly of a totally different nature, because the whole principle of action is changed; and whilst, in the heathen world, there could be no permanent virtue, because there was no adequate motive for producing and preserving it, the practice of every virtue can now be ensured upon a higher and more heavenly principle: egotism is for ever excluded, and that expediency of action, which only “counts its gains,” can find no place in the genuine spirit of Christianity, “it is not I that live, but Christ that liveth in me.”

Previously to the coming of Christ, the state of the heathen world was truly deplorable, and shows at once the total inefficiency of every system of moral teaching which had, up to that period, been proposed. But the pure morality of the Christian dispensation, which so many, who acknowledge not its Divine origin, admire, is but a small part of the mystery of godliness. We may easily conceive another Plato, who might have improved on the system of his predecessor; but even Christian morality without Christian principles to enforce it, would have been a dead letter: the precepts of Christianity published without the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, would have been of small avail; and therefore, in leading your minds, my brethren, to the contemplation of the superior purity of Christian virtue, I cannot do so without also pointing out “the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world.” This is the life of religion, this produces morality, but cannot be produced by it. Faith, without works, is truly said to be dead; but works, without faith, are equally so, and the heathen world is my witness. In this view St. Augustine called the virtues of some pagans, only splendid vices, because they were wanting in this life-giving principle. The sanctification of the heart, therefore, by the Holy Spirit, and the purifying thereof, by the blood of sprinkling,

bring forth the morality of the Gospel. We are confident then of outward virtue when these right principles prevail, as we are of the fruit of that tree which is made good and blooms without fail in its proper season. Thus, in order to produce morality, on which all men are agreed, because it is found connected with the welfare of mankind, we must have more than the light of nature—we must have more than the highest state of human reason and philosophy—that is, we must have our morality, as well as every thing else, *revealed in its principle*: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” “If a man,” says the Redeemer, “*love me*, he will keep my words;” these are the shining lights by the side of pagan doctrine, which teach us, that if any man would take care of and love himself, he will restrain his passions, and be moderate in his enjoyments.

The whole matter, then, stands clearly thus. Upon the ruins of a false philosophy, which teaches virtue because it is personally profitable, and gives that false colouring to laudable actions, which dazzles, whilst it blinds the understanding, Christianity has established a principle which is alone worthy to be the main spring of human actions. The gospel insists that we should be good because God is good,—that the genuine motive to all good deeds is a love of them for their own sake, as well pleasing to

the Redeemer of our souls ; and however men may be plied and exhorted to goodness by motives of a secondary kind, we must come at length to the Christian principle, before the service of God can be perfect freedom. We may have known, indeed, instances of men being stopped in their career of dissipation by an assurance that inevitable ruin was coming fast upon them ; we may have witnessed others pursuing a virtuous line of conduct, from being persuaded that important advantages might result from it. Often, too often, our youth are instructed, without the inculcation of higher motives than these to the performance of their duty ; but this, brethren, is not the morality of the Scriptures : “ My son, give me thine heart.” “ Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow me, and then thou shalt have treasure in heaven.” These, and such like, are the moral precepts with which the Holy Gospel abounds : not only do they contain vigour in principle, but disinterestedness in practice,—not only are they intrinsically superior to all others, but they contribute most effectually to individual peace of mind ; for not the performance alone of good actions brings complacency to the reflecting mind, but the motives which prompted them. If a man in the course of his life can select a few good deeds, upon which his recollection dwells with greater

satisfaction than the rest, it will be, because they were performed in a purer spirit than the majority of them, with less alloy of self-interest, with more of the influence of unfeigned benevolence ; other deeds may, perhaps, have been more brilliant, nay, may have even produced a greater quantity of good to others, but because they were wanting in the upright, disinterested principle, they will not, in the retrospect, yield to the soul that repose of which it is in search. Once they were the virtues which placed the laurel on the conqueror's brow, or threw the robe of state over the eloquent senator, and perhaps the ambition of both was laudable ; but now the gold is become dim, the portals of eternity are seen in the distance, and the rod and staff of consolation are yet to be sought ; the active and brilliant career of threescore years is summoned to aid the sinking spirit, and help her in triumph over the gates of death ; but, alas ! for want of a single ingredient in all the man has done—for want of the gospel principle, which at once actuates and purifies, the consolation expected from the great and flattering deed is not found, nor can any specious argument supply its place to the satisfaction of the conscience. But if at this moment it were possible to infuse the principle which ought to have dictated every action, or if that, which the Scriptures call the love of God, could be supposed to have been

the ruling motive,—if the life had been one by faith in the Son of God, from which all the good works had sprung—then may ye judge, brethren, of the inward consolation to be reaped from Christian morality,—then may ye judge of the joy of the sincere believer in Christ—ye may judge of the peaceful hours he often enjoys, when the reward of his hands is given him even in this world,—when it is lawful for his enraptured mind to dwell upon the sweet remembrance—“I wrought not for mine own, but for the Gospel’s sake;” but above all, ye may judge of his expiring moments, when, like the Apostle, he can exclaim, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, henceforward there is laid up for me a crown of glory, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all those who love his appearing.” Thus it is that this life is revealed to us as a state of probation—as a preparation for a better world, of which the joys will never fade away: thus it is that the practice of Christian piety, the cultivation of holiness in the soul, in short, all that is comprehended under the term “godliness,” “is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.”

And now, brethren, you will doubtless agree with me, that the revelation of Jesus Christ,

by the excellence of its precepts, is calculated above all other systems to contribute to general and individual happiness ; and you have no doubt been led to adore the Author of that revelation, who, seeing the helpless condition of mankind, condescended to teach us from heaven. How refined then is the system of morality which Christ inculcates, and how doth His religion inspire the purest motives, viz. the love of God, and of all men for His sake ; the love of our neighbour even as of ourselves : in these things are included all the law and the prophets. “ Ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.” We hold not up the purity of the Gospel, merely, to be admired as a superior system, but to the end, that ye practise its precepts, and desire its purity. Let us examine, therefore, the secret springs of our actions ; let us sift our motives, and let us canvass the whole tenor of our lives. Good deeds, proceeding not from the good treasure of the heart, are not Christian deeds ; let not, therefore, a semblance of morality deceive you. Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thy neighbour as thyself, for this is the spirit and substance of the morality of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## LECTURE III.

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE ANCIENT PHILOSOPHERS  
AND THEIR DOCTRINE OF FUTURE REWARDS  
AND PUNISHMENTS, COMPARED WITH THE RE-  
VEALED IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

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1 THESS. iv. 13—18.

*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them, also, which sleep in Jesus, will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep, for the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord.*

SINCE it is said in the inspired writings, that “our Lord Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel,” there is evi-



dently implied, that previously to such revelation, neither Jew nor Gentile had any settled notions of the doctrine of a future state ; for only that which has been hid in obscurity can properly be said to be brought to light. The Jews, no doubt, from the writings of the prophets, could give a much better reason for any hope there might be in them on this subject, than the heathen, who were without the “ sure word of prophecy ;” but so little were their souls capable of aspiring to “ the recompence of reward ” in a world to come, that we seldom find any thing more than a promise of worldly prosperity annexed to the condition of their obedience. “ That it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee,” was the highest inducement that could safely be offered to this gross and rebellious people. The promise, however, even of a temporal reward, made by Jehovah Himself, is a sufficient pledge of an incorruptible inheritance : this temporal promise, at least, the Jews had : the heathen are emphatically said to be “ without God in the world ;” so that they had no promise, no light whatever afforded them on what was to be their future condition. All they conceived on this head was mere speculation and fancy ; even the light of nature was in this article insufficient ; for no such light can possibly remove the veil which covers futurity ; nor in any instance that we know of, did

a heathen, however wise and good, derive any consolation in the evils of life from the belief of the soul's immortality : sometimes, indeed, they derived it from the doctrine of annihilation, and sometimes a faint glimmering of a future state seemed to break in upon their minds. "There is much ground to *hope*," says Socrates, before his judges, "that death is a blessing ; for it must necessarily be one of these two things—either the dead man is nothing, and has no more sense of any thing, or else it is only a change or transition of the soul hence to another place, according to *what we are told*. If there be no sensation left, and death be like a deep sleep, or a still repose, without dreams, it is wonderful to think what an advantage it is to die <sup>1</sup>. But if the things which *are told us be true*" (this phrase he frequently repeats) "that death is a migration to another place, this is still a much greater advantage." The subject we are now about to treat of will especially enhance the value of Divine revelation, not only for the consolation which is now to be derived from it "concerning those who are fallen asleep ;" but also, from the amazing influence which the doctrine of future rewards and punishments must have on the moral conduct of men. I have forborne to dwell upon the wickedness of the

<sup>1</sup> *Cic. Tusculan. Quæst.* 41. (from Plato's *Phædo*.)

Gentile world, so awfully depicted by St. Paul, for it is rather my intention in these discourses to show you the evils resulting from a lack of knowledge, than to point out the consequences of the prevalence of wickedness. The one is but the naked fact, which requires no comment but reprobation, the other is an enquiry into the cause of the evil. The corruption of the human heart will, I am aware, at once account for all ; but the natural evil which lurks in the heart, is drawn out by the application of bad principles and the want of knowledge to remedy them ; and let it be remembered, that wherever we turn our eyes to consider the condition of a people, if we find the tone of moral feeling low and the prevalence of iniquity too visibly displayed, it may always be said of that people, as God said of Israel, they are “destroyed for lack of knowledge.”

We have already traced the immorality of the heathen world to their ignorance of the true God, and to their inefficient principles of virtue : and I think these will ever be the melancholy causes of vice and irreligion ; but a still greater cause than these, is that of unbelief in the article of the resurrection and the immortality of the soul, with all the terrors of a judgment to come ; consequently any erroneous belief or false notions of a future world and of a never-dying soul, will always have a similar effect upon the moral

character. The heathen were not altogether unbelievers in a future state, they only did not know what to believe respecting it, and they formed their notions of it as their imaginations led them. It is now my intention to bring those imaginations to bear upon the Christian assurance, that therein the word of God may shine forth in all its splendour, and compel us to do homage to “the truth as it is in Jesus.”

The universal consent of mankind, in which the law of nature consists, is as strongly pronounced in favour of the belief that “there is something after death,” as it is in the existence of a Supreme Being—the doctrine always existed in the human mind, it only wanted “bringing to light.” It is true, that as unlimited speculations upon the nature of the soul and its future existence were admitted, its very existence was sometimes denied, and this not only by those sects which made such denial part of their doctrine, but also by those wiser and more excellent men, who in solemn and remarkable language had delivered an opposite opinion, as may be instanced even in the works of Plato and of Cicero. But the nature or substance of the soul afforded speculations of a more metaphysical kind, and therefore the diversity of opinion was greater.

Empedocles thought it was the suffusion of blood over the heart: others fancied it was some

portion of the brain : it was not unfrequently confounded with animal life : Zeno believed the soul to be made of fire : Aristoxenus, the musician, thought it consisted in the general combination of feelings which he designates harmony : Xenocrates gave it no shape, but seems to have anticipated the modern school of scepticism, by making it consist in organization : Plato considered the soul as composed of three faculties—intelligence, desire, and anger, which he places respectively in the head, the heart, and the breast. And hence I suspect the idea to have originated in the theological schools of Rome, that the soul was made up of three powers—the will, the memory, and the understanding. There were other philosophers who considered the soul to be a substance of grosser materials ; but we will forbear to touch upon the material systems. None of these definitions, however, satisfied the capacious mind of Aristotle : he discarded all the four elements as forming any portion of the human soul, and imagined a fifth element, for which he was obliged to invent a name, and, by induction, we perceive in his subtle inventions something of an immortality<sup>1</sup>.

If, however, we assign the first place in pagan

<sup>1</sup> *Vide Cicron. Tusculan. Quæstiones*, cap. ix. &c. but consult *Brucker Hist. Critic. Philosophicæ*. Par. ii. lib. ii. xv. tom. i. p. 820. edit. Lipsie 1742.

theology to the schools of Plato and Aristotle : in ethics, to the systems of Socrates and the Stoics : we may safely consider the Italian sect, founded by Pythagoras, as the great school of that branch of heathen philosophy which we designate, for the sake of convenience, their metaphysics. This extraordinary man, in his speculations upon a future state, seemed to refine upon error until he touched the borders of truth. He thought that man, in the acquisition of happiness, should seek to be free from all impurity of the flesh :—"The invisible Olympus, or Heaven, admits nothing that is defiled ; therefore vices are to be avoided, and virtues to be sought after—man is preserved by the mercies of God ; therefore the Deity is to be worshipped, and the superior powers to be invoked that they would complete our imperfect work ; but since nothing material or even corporeally mingled, can be received into this abode of the blessed, it is necessary first to die, and wholly to put off this body, before we can be admitted to the society of the gods <sup>1</sup>." The nature of the soul, therefore, according to this doctrine, is immateriate, and capable of such complete purification from bodily defilements, as to be fitted for admission into the

<sup>1</sup> *Vid. Brucker Hist. Critic Philosoph.* tom. i. p. 1091. *Edit. citat. ; and Stanley's History of Philosophy.* Part ix. p. 427. *Edit. London, folio. 1701.*

presence of the Deity. We cannot but admire this sublime effect of unassisted reason : we seem to be bordering upon that life and immortality which has been brought to light in the Gospel. By these and similar passages to be found in the Greek writers (reiterated by the Roman philosophers, especially by Cicero), some have been misled as to the general belief of the heathens on this head. Plato informs us that the doctrine taught by Socrates concerning the soul's immortality, met with little credit among men : through the theories of Aristotle it is easy to discover his incredulity : and even with Cicero, it seems rather to have been a subject for his rhetoric, than a source of consolation through belief of it in his afflictions : Julius Cæsar considered those things to be fables, which are related concerning the "*Inferi*," where evil men, far from the mansions of the good, are confined to dreary abodes and places filled with horrors<sup>1</sup> : and Pliny designates all such speculations as childish and senseless fictions of mortals who aspire to an immortal

<sup>1</sup> "Bene et composite C. Cæsar paullo ante in hoc ordine de vitâ et morte disseruit ; falsa, credo, existumans quæ de inferis memorantur : diverso itinere malos a bonis loca tetra, ineulta fœda atque formidolosa habere (vel habitare.)" *Sallust. Bell. Cat. cap. li.* (verba Catonis.) Compare Cicero's *Letter to Sulpicius*.

existence<sup>1</sup>. These passages, however, prove in some measure the popular credulity, as well as the infidelity of the philosopher; and it was not, as we have said, that they rejected altogether the doctrine of a future state, but that they were in error and confusion as to how much of it they should believe. The foundation of this error was laid in the Pythagorean notion of the nature of the soul, and the disposal of it after death. It was imagined that there was a Divine Spirit diffused through the whole of nature, which was as it were the soul of the universe<sup>1</sup>. From this immense ocean of life, the soul of every man and animal dropped as it were in a particle; and, as it was impossible to annihilate that particle, the soul in its nature was immortal: it was immortal, therefore, both before its earthly existence and after; for according to this idea, the human soul was like the soul of the universe, being a portion of

<sup>1</sup> *Plin. Hist. Nat.* lib. vii. cap. 55. *But on this subject, see Dr. Whitby's commentary on 1 Timothy i. 10.*

<sup>2</sup> *Virgil. Æneid.* vi. 713 *et seq.* *Ovid. Metamorph.* xv. v. 153.—But Ovid does not faithfully deliver the doctrines of Pythagoras. Cæsar found the doctrine of transmigration among the Gallic Druids, “*imprimis hoc volunt persuadere non interire animas, sed ab aliis post mortem transire ad alios atque hoc maxime ad virtutem excitari putant metu mortis neglecto.*”—*Cæsar de bello Gallic.* vi.



it, *uncreate*. When this particle of divine life had ceased to animate one body, it either returned to its great Fountain, or passed into some other body, which latter opinion, called transmigration or metempsychosis, has generally been attributed to Pythagoras, but without sufficient authority. It might rather be called the doctrine of those who either misunderstood or wilfully misrepresented his system ; for this philosopher delivers a more salutary doctrine. He taught, that the soul would return to the elements from which it descended, after first undergoing a purgatorial process. If a man when he hath put off his body remain burdened with vices, he begins to be miserable, which misery after death, Pythagoras divides into two kinds : the one is of a less degree than the other, that is, it is nearer happiness, so that in the regions below the earth there are two mansions, the elysium or the purgatory possessed by those who are in course of time to ascend to the blessedness of heaven, and the Tartarus or Hell wherein the torments are endless. He also taught that it was possible for a man to live so justly, that when he died his soul might ascend directly to the pure sky, and at all events, the more a man could purify his soul in this life the less pain would he have to endure in purgatory. Now it may appear from a system

like this, that all practical purposes were answered by the doctrine of rewards and punishments ; whereas, in fact, it met with little credit among the better informed heathens, and had no practical influence on the great mass, and why ? first, because, as a man might purify his soul in another state of existence, he was not anxious to begin the process earnestly in the present life ; and secondly, because there was such a vague notion of personal identity. No one considered the soul as his own peculiar portion : it was merely the substance of it that was immortal, nor could any one be anxious about the welfare of that substance which was to be mingled indiscriminately with the soul of the universe, in order to be restored at length to the same state in which it had existed previously to birth. It was, as far as all practical purposes were concerned, a complete annihilation. The heathen immortality is thus a totally different doctrine from that of the Gospel, and the nature of the soul is altogether differently set forth : and as to the process of its purification, if it were now reasonable to show how the doctrine of the atonement and the sanctification of the spirit would operate in comparison with the purgatorial fire, the excellence of our Gospel would be more and more apparent, and the life which is in Christ would shine as the sun in his meridian strength. Suppose

however this doctrine of the soul's immateriality and immortality to have been generally received, or suppose the rewards and punishments, as taught in the Platonic and Pythagorean schools, to have been believed by the multitude (waving the argument of the soul's identity) what was there still wanting to bring the Gospel doctrine to light?—The resurrection of the body, for teaching which, at Athens, the Epicureans and the Stoics called St. Paul a babbler and a setter-forth of strange gods. But this is the doctrine which alone presses upon man the responsibility of his actions, and as this was the great truth established by the resurrection of Christ from the dead, it was especially in this article of our faith that revelation shone conspicuously ; for, whilst the heathen glanced at the doctrines, which regard the immateriality of the soul, its capabilities of happiness, the ill effects of vice upon it, and the very punishments of the wicked ; for want of that which the Gospel alone reveals, the whole system was one of folly and uncertainty—the wicked mocked the threatenings of future punishments—the good had languid hopes of reward, and they sorrowed as men without hope for those of their friends who slept. The melancholy language of Cicero, when bereaved of his daughter, shows us how little avails the highest philosophy without the Christian's hope ; and the

consolation offered by his friend Sulpicius has been justly cited<sup>1</sup>, to enhance the consolation which is to be found in the Gospel. I have hitherto confined my observations in this lecture to the ideas which the men of Greece and Rome conceived of the nature and faculties of the soul, to what they believed or knew of its immortality, and how they viewed the rewards and punishments of a future state : the two first articles were matters of curious speculation for the philosophical mind, the latter furnished an abundance of fable for the poets. The multitude were thus taught to believe something ; but the teachers could produce no sanction to enforce their instructions : not believing much themselves, they were unable to produce any wholesome impressions upon others. Many passages indeed might be cited from their writings, which would serve to point out their creed ; but we shall not find one of them in which some mistrust is not be-

<sup>1</sup> The letters of Cicero and Sulpicius, are translated and appended by Dr. Whately, (now Archbishop of Dublin,) to his "Lectures." I am vastly indebted to one of those Lectures for much that is here advanced, on the soul's separate state.—Dr. Whately's book fell into my hands at Geneva, in the summer of 1830 ; and I recollect making free use of it, but as it is no longer in my possession, I cannot acknowledge the full extent of my obligations.—I now give a general reference to that original production.

trayed, whereas in many, an expression of greater doubt than belief in the subject is exhibited : they wanted the awful sanction of the rewards and punishments which revelation alone furnishes,—“these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” They wanted the light to discriminate between time and eternity ; for they knew not, that now is the day of grace and mercy, that this life is our state of probation. The Gospel therefore brought the light just where there was darkness ; and surely it is only by walking in that light, that we can be preserved from falling again into similar errors. Hence then it becomes necessary to inquire into THAT WHICH IS REVEALED, and to separate it from that which is not ; for if we speculate upon what is not revealed, it is evident we shall become like the Heathen, *vain in our imaginations* : and this brings me to the subject of the soul existing in a separate state from the body, to which the words I have read to you from St. Paul immediately have reference.

The evils which had arisen from speculating on the soul’s abstract existence, and the mischief likely to recur from a subject too refined for our limited conceptions, may perhaps account for the silence which the sacred writers have observed upon it, insomuch that it cannot be gathered from the Scriptures, with any degree of certainty,

whether the soul sleeps or is active in the intermediate state between death and judgment. In attempting to follow the soul in its actual separation from the body, arose all the errors of the Pagan system : this was the groundwork of their superstitious ceremonies about the dead, and easily served to work upon the feelings of those who survived. “ I cannot but subscribe,” says Cicero, “ to the authority of our ancestors, who afforded religious honours to the dead, which certainly they would not have done, unless they had had some idea of their consciousness.” Now if we wish to avoid the presumption of being “ wise above that which is written,” it seems as necessary to ascertain what is not a subject of revelation, as to know what is. Very little is said, in the Scriptures, of the nature of a future state at all : “ it doth not yet appear,” says St. Paul, “ what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” With whatever other revelations the apostle might be favoured on this subject, he did not think it advisable to speak of them ; for being caught up into the third heaven, he heard those unspeakable things, which it was not lawful for him to utter ; and when he sets before us the joys of the world to come, it is merely by declaring, in the language of the prophet, that “ eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,

neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for those that love Him." How, therefore, we shall exist in a world to come, "wherein dwelleth righteousness," we know not; but only that we shall exist, and our faculties will be so enlarged "when He shall appear," that we shall see the Almighty face to face. But whether the soul immediately after death will be active in a separate state, or sleep, until He shall appear in judgment, is no where positively revealed; we only know, that whatever may be the condition of the soul, it will be neither in a state of trial, nor capable of any change; but as death leaves it, judgment will find it: if there be any thing clear in the Scriptures, it is this; and therefore they invariably represent this life as the time allotted to man for securing his eternal welfare. The subject has been handled by many pious and learned men, and those passages in Scripture, which seem to favour the opinion of the soul's activity in an intermediate state, have been explained with sufficient clearness to show at least, that they are not positive: whilst, on the other hand, those who take alarm at this state of repose, as approaching to annihilation, and who think it would place retribution at too great a distance to influence the present existence, are exhorted to consider, that many

thousands of years are, in that case, the same as a moment of time.—The soul may be hushed in death, but will awake to judgment!—But let us see what the apostle does declare unto the Thessalonians, “by the word of the Lord,” that is to say, by express revelation.

The Thessalonians, it appears, had been bereaved of some of their Christian brethren, and this diffused a general sorrow through the Church: their grief was much increased by the apprehension, that those brethren, who had thus gone before, would not partake of the benefits of Christ's second coming, or in other words, had been forestalled by death, of all the privileges of the Christian profession. The apostle, therefore, bids them not to be sorry, as the Gentiles were in such cases, who had no hope of another world; but to consider the doctrine they had been taught to believe, viz. “that Jesus died and rose again:” and thus, becoming the first-fruits of them that slept, would bring with Him, at His second coming, those that slept in Him. He then proceeds to deliver as much as had been revealed to him on this subject—“this we say unto you by the word of the Lord.” He does not pretend to fix the day of the Lord, nor does he rebuke the Thessalonians for their erroneous speculations on its early appearance;—but he says, “of the



times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you, for yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night :” thus waving the question of the time when Christ should appear, he applies himself to console the sorrowful Thessalonians “ by the word of the Lord.” We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the Lord, (he saith, we, not meaning that he should be alive, but he personates the Christians, who shall at that period be remaining,) as if he had said, such of us Christians as shall remain unto the judgment day, shall not prevent, that is, be beforehand, or have any advantage over them which are asleep ; but this will be the order of that great and awful day, the Lord Himself will visibly appear, descending from the heavens with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God ; and so far from the living saints having any preference, the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we (the Christians) which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we be ever with the Lord : he then bids them comfort and exhort one another with the words which he thus spake by Divine revelation. Now since the apostle’s object was to console the Thessalonians for the premature loss of their dear friends,

one might think that, had he been authorized, he would have said, even now though their bodies be asleep, their souls are in the enjoyment of bliss ; for this would have been the greatest consolation of all ; and instead of their being deprived of a share of the blessedness to come, those who had fallen asleep would ever have surpassed in bliss those who remained alive, being already in the full possession of their reward. It is evident, therefore, St. Paul had no authority to speak upon the separate state of the soul ; for he only consoles the people with that which shall happen at the judgment day ; and he says, the dead in Christ *sleep*. I do not affirm this PROVES the insipidness of the soul in the intermediate state of separation from the body ; but this I say, it proves St. Paul had no distinct revelation on the subject, and consequently, all that men may say upon it is pure matter of speculation ; and it cannot be imposed upon Christians, as an article of faith, either one way or the other. Hence we see the real Church of Christ is silent upon this point : in the three Catholic creeds which our reformers retained, the intermediate state is passed over in silence<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> The compilers of our Liturgy seem, indeed, to have inclined to the opinion, that the good soul entered immediately after death into a state of happiness—but their senti-

We read of no judgment in the Scriptures, except that of the last day : the end of the world is invariably pointed to, by the sacred writers, as the time for men to give an account of the deeds done in the body. Since then it hath not pleased the Lord to reveal this secret unto the children of men, why should man “intrude into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind?”

ments are only slightly seen, in one of the prayers at the burial of the dead ; most of the Latin fathers entertained a similar opinion ; but it was not imposed by our reformers as an article of faith. If we consult the primitive Church we shall find the authority for the popular opinion diminish. Irenæus states the orthodox faith as follows :—

Manifestum est, quia discipulorum ejus animæ abibunt *in invisibilem locum* definitum eis à Deo, et ibi usque ad resurrectionem commorabuntur, sustinentes resurrectionem, post recipientes corpora, et perfectè resurgentes, hoc est corporaliter, quemadmodum et Dominus resurrexit, sic venient ad conspectum Dei. *Adv. Hæres.* lib. v. cap. 31. And Lactantius, though later, denies that souls are judged immediately after death, but maintains they are kept in one common custody, till the time arrives when the great Judge shall make a trial of their merits. It is generally agreed among divines, that the soul shall not enjoy the presence of God until the resurrection ; but this state of custody, or negative happiness, differs but little in its practical influence from the opinion of a state of sleep, or unconscious repose. I conceive the Christian is at liberty to derive his consolation from either view of the subject he finds most consoling—but the council of Trent has made one view alone of it the foundation of the invocation of saints !—

It seems to have been least of all designed in revelation, to administer to the gratification of the natural mind ; and in bringing to light the immortality of the soul, the Spirit hath forborne to speak to the fancy of the poet, to aid the reveries of the philosopher, or to promote the filthy lucre of the priest ; He hath left the empty honours of the dead unsanctioned, He hath not been pleased to raise the curtain which conceals the destiny of a departed spirit from the curious speculation of the survivor, so that he can neither judge of its satiety of joy, nor of despair ; at the same time that the living mortal is left on the brink of eternity, whither he may accompany the kindred soul, and whence he may almost see her wing her flight to the unexplored regions ; but after this he is to return to his house with hope in his distress, and with trembling in his hope. Still, however, the same Divine Author of revelation hath informed the responsible being, man, that there is “a new heaven and a new earth, in which dwelleth righteousness,” and that there is a place of “outer darkness, where there shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” He hath pointed out, beyond the limits of nature, a boundless and untried ocean ; but he hath forborne to make the man an angel, to track its immensity, until he be clothed with an angel’s nature : he is

told to be content in this world with the knowledge of the fact, that when he awakes with the Divine likeness, he will be satisfied with it ; but how and when that glorious satisfaction will be imparted, otherwise than at the general judgment, remains untold.

But although our inquiries into the economy of the world of spirits are thus restrained, the weak and credulous mind is restless, except it be gratified by some instruction relating to the dead : it easily lends a willing ear to legendary lore, and raises an imaginary spectre from the tomb, to gratify the “superstitious horror,” and as this is not confined to the mere vulgar, but often gains upon the most vigorous mind, there is evidently something in it congenial to the natural man. The sagacity of designing men has not been slow to discover, in this tendency of the human mind, the materials of a system at once adapted to interest and domination : accordingly, all the circumstances which may happen after the soul’s separation from the body, have been as accurately described as if the inventors had been eye-witnesses of the business of the world to come. But it may be said, why did not the Author of revelation put an end to these doubts, by clearly unfolding the wonders of a future world ? for then the imagination would have been at once restrained ; the evils which have

arisen from so abstract a question, would have been prevented. The answer is easy : if in the essential doctrines of Christianity, which are clearly revealed, there be still doubt and perplexity to the natural mind, what proof is there that it would not have been the same, if the mysteries of a separate state of existence had been unfolded ? It is very possible, that if it had pleased the Almighty to reveal the secret, the perverseness of mankind would have shown itself to a greater extent than is now apparent in their ignorance of the matter. It is not always that the carnal mind submits to receive a truth, because “ the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

But when we reflect upon the errors and superstition which have arisen in the Gentile world, from their vain speculations on the separate state of the dead, the silence of the inspired writers upon the subject may in some measure be accounted for ; neither would the discussion of the subject, if it were renewed, be attended, as far as we can judge, with any other effect than that of keeping alive the curiosity of men. Following, therefore, the example of the sacred penmen, we say nothing of those who are fallen asleep, except that they must one day “ appear before the judgment-seat of Christ,” and there receive their everlasting sentence ; for although we might dream with Pythagoras, and

refine with Plato, and give to each departed soul its lighter or darker shade of vice, and keep it for different periods of time in a state of purgation, until it were fit to re-ascend to the pure æther, it might be good Pagan theology, but Christianity knows nothing of it. “I know in whom I have believed,” is the language of inspiration, “and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day.” “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” In these expressions, as to the fact of the resurrection to eternal life, we cannot but remark the total silence of the apostle on the subject of an intermediate state.

Revelation, then, has given us an assurance, unknown to the heathen, that we shall live for ever in another world: that the body, glorified and re-united to the soul, shall “stand before the judgment-seat of Christ:” that there, whatever may be the intervening state, about which it concerns us not to be curious, we shall receive our final sentence—“these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” With this doctrine we arrive at a great practical conclusion, “we must work while it is day, for the night cometh

when no man can work." Whatever may happen immediately after death, this one thing is sure, if the Scriptures have any meaning; there will be no room for repentance, no place for amelioration, no more redemption, no more forgiveness: those that are already fallen asleep in Christ may be even now as the angels of God, their disembodied spirits may be crowding around the throne of the Almighty, but this affecteth not our state of probation here. "God," saith the apostle, "hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep we should live together with him." Wherefore, my brethren, comfort yourselves together, and edify one another with words like these: continually keep in view the end of this mortal career, and realize the presence of the Judge, before whom the spirit, "clothed upon with a house" different to this of our earthly tabernacle, shall one day stand: consider the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that if the soul, after having been its day in this world of trial, shall depart without securing a personal interest in that redemption, it will be for ever lost, and the gates of love and mercy eternally closed against it. But if in a simple dependence upon the Saviour's merits, and through the blood of sprinkling applied by faith, the soul is purified from all



filthiness of flesh and spirit, so that the seeds of sin which may remain in the mortal body, are not imputed as sin for the sake of Him on whom that soul believes and depends ; then as soon as the breath of life is gone, and the body is only fit to be mingled with the dust, the spirit enters into security and rest, to be kept by the power of God (in what state He pleaseth, but unknown to us) until that day ; then shall there be given unto it “ the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” and so shall the believer shine forth in the firmament of God’s glory as a star<sup>1</sup>, which shall twinkle in its proper sphere throughout the ages of eternity.

<sup>1</sup> Daniel xii. 3.      1 Cor. xv. 41.      1 Pet. i. 13.

## LECTURE IV.

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### THE STATE OF RELIGION AMONG THE JEWS PREVIOUS TO THE COMING OF CHRIST.

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ST. MARK vii. 6—9. 13.

*Jesus answered and said unto them, well hath Esais prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, this people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit, in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men ; for laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups ; and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. \* \* \* \* Making the word of God of none effect, through your tradition which ye have delivered : and many such like things do ye.*

IF the Gentile world were sitting in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and were ignorant of the true God, it is no wonder, humanly speaking, that they made to themselves gods after their own inventions, and fell headlong into all manner of superstition : if they knew not the law of God,

but were directed only by the feeble light of the law of nature, which fluctuated with their passions, and was frequently lost in the defiled conscience, it is no matter of great surprise that they were immoral : and if they were without hope, and knew nothing of a life to come, it is no wonder that they sorrowed even to despair at the thought of leaving this world. But for the Jews, to whom were committed the oracles of God, who had heard of the “wonders in Egypt, and the miracles in the field of Zoan,” who had learned His righteous statutes and judgments, which He delivered by His servant Moses, and who had heard that God was “not the God of the dead, but of the living,” how came they to fall into such a state of depravity, as to be no less in need of a new revelation than the rest of the heathen world ? The answer is set forth in the words of the Redeemer, which I have now read to you. Although they were in possession of the law of Moses and the prophets, and might have learned better things, they had corrupted that word of God, and substituted for it, or mingled with it, the ordinances and traditions of men, more congenial to their natural and depraved hearts. For inward purity, they had substituted the external forms and ceremonies of worship : they had laid aside the weightier matters of the law, at the same time that they rigidly

adhered to the letter of their religious rites, which might be performed with heartless service : they were very scrupulous in observing a fair outward show of religion, and purchasing the good will of the priesthood, for they paid tithe even “ of mint, and anise, and cummin,” but they omitted “ the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.” The Jews therefore were justly in the same state of condemnation with the Gentiles, but from different causes : the one having no law and following their own corrupt imaginations, the other having the law of God, but corrupting it to the standard of their own depravity. The condemnation of the Jew was as much increased as his means of knowledge exceeded those of the heathen ; when, therefore, the light did appear to lighten the Gentiles as well as to be the glory of Israel, it was said to be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for the privileged city which, by rejecting the Lord of glory, increased the measure of its guilt.

But in order to achieve our proposition, and fully show the necessity as well as the inestimable blessing of Divine revelation, let us now take a special view of the religious condition of the Jews, whence we may discern how justly they deserved the severe rebukes which our Lord so often directed against them. It will however be

necessary to keep in view the three subjects on which we have tried the heathen world, viz. what was their theology? what were their morals, both in knowledge and practice? and what hopes they had of another state of existence?

“What advantage then hath the Jew?” (asks St. Paul, for the sake of argument) “or what profit is there in circumcision?” “Much every way, but chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God:” and in no particular was this advantage more apparent than in preserving among them the knowledge of the true God, so that they at least honoured Him with their lips. Possessing the books of Moses and the prophets, it was hardly possible they could have any degrading notions of the Deity; neither do we find that the Jews had formed any speculative ideas of the Divine Essence: they adhered closely to the written word, pronounced the name of Jehovah with profound reverence, and read the sublime descriptions of His attributes and His glory with fear and trembling. It was not in the abstract view of the Godhead that they erred: they never lost the name whereby the Almighty was so awfully denominated, “I AM;” nor was it in the object, but in the manner of their worship, that they were mistaken. The severe rebukes of our Lord do not fall upon their pure theological faith as it respected the Deity; but upon

their degrading manner of doing Him service. Frequently had the Almighty condescended to reason with His rebellious people upon the nature of Divine worship : frequently did He represent to them, by the glowing language of His prophets, how utterly inconsistent with His glory it was that they put their outward ceremonies in the place of inward and heart-felt devotion. “ To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand to tread my courts ? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me ; the new moons and the sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.” It was not so much the first commandment they transgressed, as the second : it was not that they really thought the Godhead was to be represented by a graven image, or that they were to fall down and worship the stock of a tree ; but by performing the outward ceremony, they made a kind of compromise with their consciences, and derived self-satisfaction from their external worship : “ Aha ! I am warm, I have seen the fire,” as the prophet describes their delirious joy. It does not appear that our Saviour ever upbraided any of the Jews, of whatever sect they might be, with corrupting the grand doctrine of the Unity of

God, as preserved in the Jewish canon of scripture ; but since they had descended to a degree of moral depravity, which the Gentiles scarcely surpassed, we discover no personal advantage to them in their abstract orthodoxy. So long as the leading truth remained upon earth, that God was the first Cause and Creator of all things, and was highly to be feared by all the creatures of His hands, He was not left without witness among the nations : and perhaps the Jews, dispersed, as they were, all over the world, were a standing reproach to the idolatry and superstition of the Gentile world ; but in a general view of their religious state, we shall find the superior knowledge they possessed to be of no personal advantage to them, because it did not tend to the purifying of their hearts and lives. We shall now, therefore, proceed to consider in what their perversity mainly consisted, and why they equally had need of a new revelation from heaven, although possessing the ancient oracles of truth.

After the return of the Jews from Babylon, and the restoration of their church under the administration of Ezra and Nehemiah, there arose two leading parties among them : the one adhered strictly to the written word, maintaining its sufficiency in all that it concerned a righteous man to know : the other added to

the written law, the traditions of the elders, and adopted many rigorous observances, which gave them, in the eyes of the people, a title to superior sanctity, and they are mentioned in the book of Maccabees, by the name of Assidœans<sup>1</sup>. From these proceeded the Pharisees and the kindred sects, such as the Scribes and Lawyers : from the former, descended the Sadducees and the Samaritans, and the more durable sect of the Karaites ; besides these we read in the New Testament of the Herodians and Galilæans. The Essenes, though apparently an important sect, are not mentioned by the sacred writers : they are perhaps alluded to, and may be considered as a reformed portion of the Pharisees.— I am not aware that any of these denied the Unity of God : they all professed to know God, it was only in works they denied Him. It was not theoretical, but it was practical atheism : it was not like the Gentile condition, being “ without God in the world ;” but it was living without a sense of His presence and His power upon their minds.

The Pharisees, to whom the words I have read to you were particularly addressed, formed the most numerous class among the Jews at the

<sup>1</sup> 1 Maccab. ii. 42, and vii. 13. But see Prideaux's *Con.* &c. part ii. book v.



coming of Christ. They originally existed in the powerful party of the Assidæans, but they do not appear as a separate body until about one hundred and fifty years before Christ ; they assumed the name of Pharisees, that word denoting, in the Hebrew language, something separate, and set themselves apart with a display of sanctity. They were not, as I have observed, idolaters ; but, with regard to the immortality of the soul, they were evidently imbued with the doctrines of Pythagoras. I do not mean they had recourse to the Italic sect of philosophers for such doctrines, but they drew them, as is probable, from the same source, viz. the Egyptian theology. The Pharisee no doubt despised the learning of Greece ; but if “Moses were learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” it might not be thought altogether unworthy of the Scribe, who sat in Moses’ seat. Agreeably to the Pythagorean notion, they imagined, that when the soul was gone out of the body, it did not die, but transmigrated from one, to some other body, and through a succession of removals, lived to infinity : hence we find that, when our Lord performed those miracles, which they could not but acknowledge, they began to speculate upon the soul which most probably animated His body : some said He was Elias, others Jeremiah ; but certainly, as the least credulous of them thought,

He must be some one of the prophets. The same doctrine appears to have been acknowledged by Herod ; for, hearing of Christ, his remark was, that John the Baptist had risen from the dead : that is, his soul had re-appeared in Christ ; and therefore, he adds, “ mighty works do show forth themselves in him.” Even the disciples were not divested of similar notions, until after the resurrection. The Pharisees appear further to have entered into the Pythagorean system of bodily defilements and purifications ; and hence their scrupulous observance of washings, fastings, and their choice of meats : they thought that the soul was polluted by the nourishment necessary for the support of the body ; but they did not consider the body defiled from “ that which cometh out of the man.” Hence we observe in the Pharisee, a sort of austerity and self-denial, coupled with the most degrading vices—self-righteousness, with all the pride which belongs to it—and sin, without any of the shame which should ever accompany it. These observations are abundantly illustrated in the discourses of our Lord with the Pharisees<sup>1</sup>. But the doctrine of Pythagoras did not stop here. After all the purifying of the soul whilst it remained in the body, there was still another state of purgation

<sup>1</sup> St. Matthew, xv. 11. 17. Mark vii. 18—21.

contemplated. In this, the Pharisee perhaps believed; and the Jews have preserved a doctrine of purgatory to the present day, which is not, however, considered as a third place of existence, but a place wherein the soul, by suffering a little of the fire of hell, obtains redemption. They limit the period of the purification to "twelve months," and pretend that on the Sabbath days the soul has a respite from the pains of purgation<sup>1</sup>. This doctrine of the Jews depends entirely upon the tradition of the elders, for neither Jew nor Christian ever presumed to say it was found in Moses or the prophets. Judas Maccabeus is supposed to have believed in the efficacy of prayers and sacrifices for the dead; for we read he sent two thousand drachms of silver to Jerusalem to defray the expenses of a sin offering for those who had fallen in the conflict with Gorgias. "Now if he had not hoped," says the apocryphal writer, "that they that were slain should have risen again, it had been superfluous and vain to pray for the dead<sup>2</sup>." And we may

<sup>1</sup> Vide Buxtorf. *Synagog. Judaic.* cap. xlix. and Basnage *Histoire des Juifs*, liv. iv. chap. xxxii. § 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Maccab. xii. 44, 45. I consider the criticism of Bishop Patrick and Mr. Lowth upon these verses very feeble, and not the way I would choose to deal with Cardinal Bellarmine's arguments thereupon: "La Religion Judaïque," says a sagacious writer, "commença de s'altérer par le commerce qu'on

add, it would have been equally superfluous, if he had not supposed the departed souls to be in such a condition, as to be helped by the prayers of the living to a better state of existence. It is evident therefore the author of the books of the Maccabees believed in something like a purgatory; that is, the doctrine, if such it can be called, which is traced to the period in which the Pharisaical sect began: at the same time we remark, in the phraseology of the apocryphal writer, the slight touching of AN OPINION NOT GENERALLY RECEIVED. The connexion which the Jews had with Egypt, after their return from Babylon, had given them, as I conceive, these doctrines of the soul's separate existence, in common with the Platonic and Pythagorean schools; and the Separatists or Pharisees pre-

eut avec les étrangers; ce commerce fut beaucoup plus fréquent depuis les conquêtes d'Alexandre qu'il n'étoit auparavant, et ce fut particulièrement avec les Egyptiens qu'on se lia, surtout pendant que les Rois d'Egypte furent maîtres de la Judée, qu'ils y firent des voyages et des expéditions, et qu'ils en transportèrent les habitans. On n'emprunta pas des Egyptiens leurs idoles, mais leur méthode de traiter la théologie et la religion; les docteurs Juifs transportés ou nés en ce pays-là se jettèrent dans les interprétations allégoriques," &c.—*Basnage Hist. des Juifs*, lib. ii. chap. ix.

This is the real origin of traditions, which we doubt not every new discovery in Egyptian learning will tend to confirm.

served them by tradition until the coming of Christ. They were in some measure revived in the Talmud, and had not been unacceptable to the schools of Alexandria<sup>1</sup>. But there was still another way in which the Pharisees thought lesser crimes might be punished : in the bodies which were tenanted by souls that had before committed crimes. The disciples, partaking of this error, asked Christ whether the blind man or his parents had sinned, that he was born blind. This question supposes a state of pre-existence : that it was possible for the man to sin before he was born ; that is, that his soul had sinned in some other body, and that this blindness was an expiating punishment, which must be endured for the soul's sake<sup>2</sup>. Upon this notion was founded their doctrine of predestination, which, although carried as far as the fatalism of the Stoics, was not esteemed to be inconsistent with the free exercise of the will. In this, their distinction was somewhat ingenious : they pretended that God, before a man was born, decided upon his lot in

<sup>1</sup> These notions were certainly taken up by Origen, and after him by Lactantius. Of the ancient Ecclesiastical writers, these are almost two of the last that should be taken as authorities in matters of faith.

<sup>2</sup> In this instance the learning of Dr. Lightfoot appears to me to obscure his penetration ; but see Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitat. on John ix. 2. Vol. II. p. 568.

life, whether he should be wise or ignorant, strong or weak ; but it was to depend entirely upon the man whether he would be righteous or wicked. The answer which our Lord gave to his disciples, in the case of the blind man, shows at once the difference between a heathen fatalism and the doctrines of Divine fore-knowledge and providence : “ Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents ; but that the works of God should be manifest in him.” We shall now therefore conclude, that in the nature of the moral government of God, in the doctrine of the soul’s immortal existence, and the resurrection of the body, the Pharisees had great need of a Divine revelation.

But independently of these things, which had not yet been “ brought to light by the Gospel,” if they had adhered to the word of God, as they possessed it, they might at least have arrived at a better moral condition ; for it was not by denying the written oracles of truth, that they became so degenerate ; but it was by substituting for them, precepts of their own, “ making the word of God vain by their traditions.” These traditions, which they called the oral law, had been transmitted, as they pretended, to Moses upon Mount Sinai, along with the written law, and they had been preserved in the Jewish Church, from one generation to another. By the strict observance of both the oral and written law, the Scribes and

Lawyers taught, that a man might not only justify himself before God, but also do meritorious works of supererogation, and that fasting, giving of alms, ablutions and confessions, sufficed to expiate sin. The mass of the people knew but little of the written word, it was left to the Scribes and Doctors to expound, according to their oral traditions, and they (our Lord says it of them,) took away the key of knowledge: they entered not into the kingdom of heaven by the door of faith themselves, and they prevented those that had the desire from entering therein. Our Saviour, in his discourses with the Pharisees, produces an instance of their wilful perversion of the holy law of God, in their breach of the fifth commandment, which is so agreeable to the best feelings, and the plainest dictates of our nature: it had pleased God to attach to the faithful discharge of it, the promise of a long life in the land of Canaan, so that it is said by St. Paul to be the first commandment with a promise attached to it. The precept itself is beautiful—"Honour thy father and thy mother;" no parent can be insensible to its value—none who would not invoke its authority against the child of disobedience; but the Lawyers, pretending to sanctify the Divine precepts, added to this fifth commandment, that a son was bound to nourish his father, to clothe him, to lead him in and out, to wash his hands

and his feet, yea, and to beg for him. By such a tradition as this, it might seem that the commandment would be even more rigorously observed ; for there is in it an appearance of sanctity which goes beyond the written word. There is, however, a point, my brethren, at which that which seemeth to be virtue, ceases to be such, and we read of the possibility of being “righteous over much.” There is moreover a prescribed path of duty which turneth neither to the right hand nor to the left, by which our moral nature must aim at the perfection required ; but if we attempt to go beyond it, our presumption may be expected to lead us to destruction. God hath adapted his laws to that of which our nature is capable : man can neither add to nor diminish from them with impunity. But to return to the teachers in the synagogue : the fifth commandment being thus rigorously enforced, there arose another precept no less to be observed—it was openly taught that a parent, in comparison with a teacher of the law, was to be esteemed of no account, and therefore, whatever a person thought proper to give for the use of the Rabbi, or to dedicate for the general support of the altar, could not possibly be applied to another purpose ; but it was enough to make a vow, that such property should ultimately belong to the Church, whether for the reparation of the temple or the revenues



of the priest. Property so consecrated was said to be “corban, it is a gift;” when therefore the aged parent came to his wealthy son, pleading the sanctity of the fifth commandment, and appealed to the authority of the synagogue, and the strict interpretation of the law, the answer he generally received was this, “Whatsoever I might have had, in which thou wert entitled to a share, O my father, it is now a gift, it is sacred to more pious uses,” “and ye suffer him,” adds the Redeemer, “no more to do aught for his father and mother;” for if the son, moved by the parent’s appeal, should have applied to the Rabbi, for the desecration of a small portion of his devoted goods, he would have incurred his displeasure. Observe the subtlety of the Pharisee, and the impiety of his tradition: if he were accused of perverting the law of God, his answer was ready; “On the contrary, I honour that law, and by strict injunction the son is obliged to nourish, yea, and beg for his father, to this he is bound, but to have consecrated his whole estate to pious uses he was not bound.<sup>1</sup>” This is but one of the many instances recorded by the Evangelists of Pharisaical doctrine and practice, and yet we are told of the specious zeal and sanctity displayed in their outward deportment,

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Lightfoot, as above cited, vol. ii. p. 20, or Matt. chap. xv. ver. 6.

their strict observance of the rites and ceremonies prescribed by the law, their sprinklings, their long prayers, not only in the synagogues, but in the public streets, the sentences of the law written on their robes, the ostentation of their alms-deeds, their rigorous fasts and mortifications, their paying of tithes and their proselyting zeal. The accounts of the Evangelists are more than confirmed by the Jews themselves : we learn from the Talmud, that some of them in order to appear plunged in deep meditation, walked as if afraid to touch the ground : others, that they might not be disturbed in their reveries, enveloped their heads in a large hood, so that nothing could be seen but their feet : a third class walked with their eyes closed, lest the sight of any external object should excite their passions : they composed their features to an air of gloom and solemnity, and in short, the whited sepulchre, to which Jesus compares them, is but too faithful a picture of their vice and hypocrisy. Notwithstanding all their errors and wickedness, they were inspired with a wonderful zeal for making proselytes, which our Lord thus describes and condemns : “ Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” Upon the whole,

therefore, we perceive that this, the most numerous and influential sect of the Jews, had the form of godliness, without any of its power, which they even denied ; but by their pride and self-righteousness, their want of the charity which distinguishes the action of the real Christian, their neglect of the weightier matters of the law, and above all their setting aside the commandments of God, to make room for their traditions, they had become the children of hell ; so that not only did they, like the heathen, place their virtues, such as they considered them, upon a corrupt principle, but they even came short of heathen morality. Therefore the publicans and sinners, the most abject and despised of the human race, went into the kingdom of heaven before them. It is manifest then they had need of a Divine teacher !

We will not now dwell long upon the Scribes and Lawyers : they are so often mentioned in the Gospels along with the Pharisees, that we may suppose them to have been of that sect, not however without some exceptions, for we find scribes and lawyers of the Sadducees. The business of the former was to write out and expound the law : the lawyers, whose office differed not much, frequently came to Christ with some subtle question, thinking “ to entangle him in his talk :” they were amazingly well read in all the

commentaries of the Rabbis. A person who had not beforehand studied their logical distinctions might easily be ensnared by their subtleties; the people referred all their difficulties to them as the infallible expounders of the law : they, on the other hand, boasted of their authority, and of having, by an uninterrupted succession, preserved the rites of the law and other orthodox sacrifices. “ We are Abraham’s children,” they said, “ and were never in bondage to any man.” They claimed precedence in the synagogue, and loved to be greeted in public places : it would be hard to suppose there were not among them many well-intentioned men, of whom some afterwards embraced the Gospel ; but speaking of them and their system of doctrine as a whole, Christ positively said, “ Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

If the Pharisees may be supposed to have imbibed something of the heathen notions of incorporeal substances, the Sadducees had not less adopted the system of materialism ; for this was just the distinction between the two sects : “ the Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit ; the Pharisees confess both.” Since, however, we find they acknowledged God the Creator of the world, and even admitted the doctrine of a Providence, they must have rejected

the atomical system of Democritus and his followers, and there are consequently many things in the doctrines of Epicurus which they could not receive. Like the rest of the Jews, they had preserved inviolate the unity of God, and his providence in human affairs ; in all other things they were as the heathen who knew not God : they have aptly been denominated Epicurean Deists, a title which combines their Jewish and Pagan principles. Like Epicurus, they confined all rewards and punishments to the present life, and maintained pleasure to be the chief good, consequently they indulged their appetites and passions as they thought fit, and the only wisdom (in which also consisted their virtue) was so to economize their enjoyments, that there should result the most pleasure and the least pain possible. In point of antiquity, they were before the Pharisees, having their name and origin, as some suppose, from Sadok, who was instructed by Antigonus Sochæus : he merely taught that men ought not to serve God for the sake of reward, but to love virtue for its own sake. The Jewish doctor might have borrowed a few things from Zeno, with whom he must have been nearly contemporary ; but his doctrine, which was, perhaps, intended to lay the foundations of a better system of morality, was perverted by his successors, until both rewards and punishments, toge-

ther with virtue itself, were denied, as having no place in the Divine or human economy. The Sadducees rejected all traditions as of pure human invention, and also all the written word except the Pentateuch ; and it is to be remarked that Christ invariably confines himself, in his discourses with the Sadducees, to quotations from the books of Moses. So far from holding the predestination of the Pharisees, they asserted that man was the sole master of his destiny and his actions : their influence in the State rather consisted in their wealth than in their numbers, yet they were allowed to fill some of the most important offices both in the Church and in the State, and Caiaphas, the High Priest, at the time of the Crucifixion, was a Sadducee. Since, then, the teaching of Christ and his disciples was in direct opposition to the vices and sensuality of those men, we cannot wonder that, although they differed from the Pharisees in almost every thing else, they agreed in putting to death the Holy Jesus. Impurity of heart and life was common to them both ; therefore the Gospel condemned them equally, and they had equal need of a Divine revelation.

The sect of the Sadducees seems to have perished at the destruction of Jerusalem, but was again revived in the beginning of the sixth century. At that period all those oral traditions,

which had floated for ages amongst the dispersed sons of Judah, were collected and written in a book called the Talmud. The successors of the Sadducees rejected them all; the descendants of the Pharisees contended for their authority: a hundred and fifty years were spent in vain contention, and the Rabbins had to lament that the traditions had ever been committed to writing. In the year 750, Ananus and his son Saul, two learned Jews of Babylonia, stood forward as the champions of the written word, and their followers were distinguished by the name of Karaites, a word signifying their attachment to the “Scriptures”—the rest of the Jews (by far the majority) adhered to the teachers of tradition, and they were called the Rabbinites—these are the two parties into which the modern Jews are divided <sup>1</sup>. But the Karaite must not be confounded with the unbelieving Sadducee, the two only agree in their rejection of tradition. The immortality of the soul and the resurrection, the rewards and punishments in a future state, are the avowed doctrines of the Karaites; and although inferior in point of numbers to the Rabbinites, they excel them in learning and piety; and, in general, are considered more respectable as members of

<sup>1</sup> *Johan. Buxtorf. Synagog. Judaic. &c. cap. 1. Prideaux's Connection, &c. Part ii. Book V.*

society. It would have been foreign to our purpose to have mentioned the Karaites, if they had been altogether a modern sect: they probably first appeared about thirty years before Christ, at the time of the disputes between the schools of Hillel and of Shammai<sup>1</sup>. The latter, who was vice-president of the Sanhedrim, raised the same standard which we have seen Ananus rear in the eighth century; the disciples of Shammai adhered to the Scriptures, and although they respected the traditions as sayings of antiquity, they denied their authority in matters of faith.

In considering the Karaites under the head of Sadducees, it was necessary to observe these distinctions; we shall now proceed to say a few words upon another principal sect which prevailed at the coming of Christ—the Essenians, or Essenes. The most minute details of the life and manners of the Essenes are to be found in the writings of Josephus, and Philo the Jew; but we must here confine ourselves to a few general outlines of their doctrine and practice. This sect is supposed by some to have been formed as early as the Babylonish captivity; by others, at the period of the persecution of Antiochus, when the people were reduced to seek an asylum in the

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Basnage Histoire des Juifs*, Liv. ii. chap. 9.



woods and among the mountains. The analogy, however, between their practices and those of the Pharisees is, in many instances, so striking, that it is natural to suppose they were merely a party separated from the others, adopting the Pharisaical system in a more rigorous form, and we may safely add, with much more sincerity, the connexion between their respective doctrines is not less observable. The predestination of the Essenes was more absolute than that of the Pharisees ; for they considered every action of life to be overruled by a fatal necessity : they believed in the rewards and punishments of a future state, but only as they affected the soul ; for they maintained that the soul, once released from the body, which was but a miserable prison, would never be reunited to any such gross material ; consequently they denied the resurrection. Their notions of an incorporeal world partook of a more refined system of Platonism, or, more properly, of Egyptian theology, than those of the Pharisees : they had imagined an elysium, where the purified soul would enjoy a soft and balmy air, beyond the Western ocean, and thought the easiest way of arriving there was to mortify the body by rigorous fasts and austere discipline ; and the same regions which had witnessed the emaciated forms of these Jewish ascetics, at the time of Christ's coming, exhibited about three centuries afterwards the

more astonishing picture of the folly of the Stylites<sup>1</sup>. The Essenes, of whom we are speaking, professed a great regard for the written law of Moses, and we are not aware that they rejected any part of the canon of Scripture : they had, however, amongst them some other mysterious writings of great antiquity, which, according to Philo, they made constant use of ; they even considered the law of Moses as an allegory, under which was concealed mysterious truths, and they never interpreted the words literally. They were distinguished in their retired life by their abstinence, their love of peace and solitude, and they had their goods in common : their ablutions and purifications, on account of cleanliness, were carried to a ridiculous extreme ; their observance of the Sabbath was such that they secluded themselves from the light of day ; they generally lived in celibacy, and adopted the children of others, educating them with care as their own ; every one becoming a member of their society was sworn to observe the rules of their religion, justice, fidelity, and chastity ; to keep the secrets of their brethren inviolate, to maintain their institutions, and above all to commemorate the names of the angels. Philo the Jew divides them into two classes, the practical and the contemplative, called the *Therapeutæ* ; the former were chiefly

<sup>1</sup> See Mosheim Ecc. Hist. vol. i. cap. 3, sect. 12.

about Palestine and Syria, and their number is estimated by Josephus at four thousand ; the latter dwelt near Alexandria, which gave Philo so good an opportunity of describing them : they made happiness to consist entirely in contemplation : retiring from the world, they gave up all their earthly possessions to their relations and friends, and lived as hermits in separate huts ; in each of those huts was an oratory consecrated to the uses of devotion. St. Paul undoubtedly alludes to these Therapeutæ in his Epistles to the Colossians, where he warns the Christians against their voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, against that superstitious observance of ordinances implied in the “ touch not, taste not, handle not,” and where he censures that kind of will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body, which distinguished these Egyptian ascetics. They were, notwithstanding, rather objects of pity than of condemnation, for we must at least suppose they were sincere ; and it cannot be denied, from the testimony we have of them, that they were virtuous. They are no where mentioned in the New Testament ; nor does it appear that they ever came in the way of our Lord, or if they did, He had not the same cause for rebuking them as He had in the case of the Pharisees. It is with good reason supposed that John the Baptist had passed his early life in the solitudes of the Essenes, and

perhaps many of them were waiting for the consolation of Israel.

The Herodians may rather be considered as a political body ; but their religious tenets were probably those of the Sadducees, for the leaven of Herod and the leaven of the Pharisees seems to be identified by the Evangelists.

The Galileans or the Gaulonites were also a political faction, raised by Judas Theudas, a native of Gaulon, in the Upper Galilee : ten years after the birth of Christ, this man excited his countrymen to take up arms against the Romans in order to free themselves from the payment of tribute, and an attempt seems to have been made to implicate our Lord in the rebellious acts of that party ; for although Theudas was soon defeated, he left many admirers of that independence which he desired to establish. The religious opinions of the Galileans were in all probability those of the Pharisees.

A glance at the Samaritans will now complete our review of the religious condition of the Jews. This is more especially a great national distinction, the Jews of whatever sect “ have no dealings with the Samaritans ;” they were originally heathens, who joined the worship of the God of Israel with that of other gods, and it was not until the high priest Manasses left Jerusalem with some other fugitive Jews, and carried the Samaritans a copy of the law, that they

were considered as a Jewish sect. They believed themselves to be descended from Joseph, and they considered that they alone were the favorites of Heaven : their Mount Gerizim (they thought) must one day become the very seat of the Messiah, and only in that mountain could God be worshipped with acceptance ; they looked upon the prophet Ezra as an innovator and impostor, bearing in memory, no doubt, the rejecting of their suit to be allowed to share in the building of the second temple. They agreed with the Sadducees in only considering the Pentateuch as inspired, in other points of doctrine they perhaps differed but little from the Pharisees ; in their outward forms there is some discrepancy ; but they were not accused like the Pharisees of having made the word of God void by their traditions. Yet their notions of a future state, and, if we may judge from the woman that talked with our Lord, their moral condition, were not less deplorable than those of the people of Jerusalem ; they rather adhered to divers washings and ceremonies than to the weightier matters of the law, and if we were to investigate closely the state of Samaria, we should but close the mournful scene we have now depicted with other instances of the depravity of human nature : and thus it will appear, upon a recapitulation of the state of “ God’s people,” that the days had

come when the Lord, according to his promise, must have visited them, or they must have for ever perished. They had wrought themselves into such impenetrable darkness that the sun of righteousness was now required to give them light, and in whatever way we view the dispensations of Providence we must acquiesce in this conclusion—that whilst the human race (Jews and Gentiles) were “yet without strength, in due time Christ [came and] died for the ungodly.” He visited this lower world, and now at the end of eighteen centuries we celebrate his advent; Heaven has conferred the boon upon a perishing world, and no contempt or abuse of it can change the fact. But, my brethren, as far as we are individually concerned the necessity of receiving the same Christ into the hearts and affections still exists: no time nor circumstance can change it so long as human nature is full of sin and misery: without this inward operation we might as well have been of the schools of Greece or of the Sanhedrim of Jerusalem, for “this only is life eternal, to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.”

If, upon a fair and candid inquiry into God’s dealings with us, as a nation, our hearts be touched with gratitude for the inestimable gift of revealed truth, and all the blessings which follow in its train; and if that grand scheme of

salvation be consigned to those books whose authority is abundantly proved, and which bear internal evidence of their being divine—what is our obvious duty in this important particular? surely to search and study, and take every means of becoming acquainted with that blessed word, of which a great philosopher has given this eulogium, “It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of fable for its matter.” Let us, therefore, hold fast this word of truth, which alone can be our infallible guide in all difficulties of doctrine and practice. Let us take warning by those men whom Christ rebukes for having dared to make his words void by their traditions, and for teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. Let us, in admiring the institutions with which we are blessed, take heed lest, by adding to, or diminishing from, the written oracles of truth, the candlestick be removed from the place where it now standeth, and, like Belshazzar’s kingdom, it be given to another nation more worthy than we. The night of ignorance of God’s word, we believe, brethren, to be now far spent; the day of light and knowledge, we think to be at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and put on the armour of light. What then would our condition be in this life if we should let go the hopes of immortality, which are given us in Christ Jesus? Whither would our thoughts

wander, and where would they find rest if we could no longer turn them upon the revealed word, and on “Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith?” And how can we pretend to feel commiseration for the millions of our fellow creatures, whose lot has been cast in darkness or in dim twilight, if we ourselves feel not the quickening power of God’s word?

The heart of the real Christian burns within him to unfold the treasures of God’s word to those who never knew them, and he trembles for those who wilfully put away from them the revealed truth, and who prefer darkness to light; for all which, yea for all who know not the Lord Jesus, from whatever cause of misfortune, or hardness of heart, we are bound to pray. The love of Christ is liberal, and never becomes inactive as long as there remains in the world one poor benighted soul without a knowledge of the redemption which is in Christ Jesus: and hereby, brethren, we know that he abideth in us, by that very spirit of love which he hath given us. “And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness; and we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life—little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.”



## SECOND SERIES.

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ON THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY AND  
THE PRIMITIVE CHURCHES—PROGRESS OF THE  
GOSPEL DURING THE APOSTOLIC AGE.

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Ἀγράφοις χρήσασθαι φωναῖς· διὸ σχεδὸν ἡ πᾶσα γέγονε  
σύγχυσις τε δὲ ἡκαταστασία τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν.

EUSEBIUS APUD SOCRAT.



# LECTURE I.

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THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE FIRST CHRISTIAN  
CHURCH AT JERUSALEM, AND THE SUBSEQUENT  
DISPERSION OF THE DISCIPLES, IN CONSEQUENCE  
OF THE MARTYRDOM OF ST. STEPHEN.

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Acts ii. 42.

*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and  
fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

OF all the changes and revolutions that have ever taken place in the sentiments and institutions of mankind, there is none which offers so intense an interest as that which was effected by the introduction of Christianity into the world ; for if it be regarded as a mere portion of history, what is there in the annals of our species which presents such important and permanent results ? That a mild and benevolent religion should “ gently insinuate itself into the minds of men,” should gradually undermine the prejudices and

preconceived notions of the greatest philosophers, should overthrow the popular superstition, and defeat the views of kings and rulers, and spreading itself with wonderful rapidity, should finally erect its banner triumphant in every part of the civilized world, is such an event to contemplate, as is not elsewhere to be found in the whole history of man. But when we find in these exterior circumstances the eternal welfare of our souls to be interwoven, and that in all this it was but the hand of God making use of his creatures as the instruments for accomplishing his mighty designs : when we discover that the kingdom of Christ was never intended to be of this world, but to be set up in the hearts of men without regard to their external policy : when we see that “ peace on earth and good-will towards men ” was the proclamation sent forth by the King of kings, to gather from every corner of the world the people whom He had chosen, then the history of Christ's Church puts on a different aspect, and we no longer regard it as a narrative which is to be read or treated like a common history, but as a faithful record of the dealings of God with His people, and as a pure model of what they ought to be with whom He has promised to remain by His Spirit to the end of the world. But when I speak of the Church of Christ and its history, after this manner, I mean to confine myself to

that which is recounted of it in the Scriptures, written under the immediate dictation of the Spirit of God ; for we are assured that as many as walk according to this rule—" peace resteth on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." If I am to treat of this subject before you, brethren, I feel that to do any good to your souls and to mine own, to impart any spiritual benefit to you from the subject of " Christ's Church upon earth," I must bring it before you in all its primitive simplicity, and in all its spiritual clothing : I must hold it up to your view as a perfect picture, before it was sullied by the rash and ambitious hand of man, before it was injured by the worldly interests which, alas ! too soon stained its innate beauty. It is on this account I have purposed to discourse to you, during this and the following Sundays of this holy season, upon the first establishment and the real nature of the Church of Christ, upon the rapid progress which the Gospel made, and the impediments it was liable to from within and without its pale, during the first century, or the apostolic age.

The words I have placed at the head of this lecture will naturally suggest, for our first inquiry, the establishment of the earliest Christian Church at Jerusalem : this I shall now endeavour to lay more fully before you, and then take a

review of the dispersion of the disciples subsequent to the martyrdom of St. Stephen.

I must suppose, as I think I have a right to do, that ye all come prepared to this subject with a competent knowledge of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ; that ye are well acquainted with those “former treatises (the Gospels) of all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day that he was taken up into heaven.” I will further suppose that ye bear well in mind the first acts of the apostles, in choosing Matthias to supply the place of the apostate, and in waiting for the promise they had received from Christ, that he would send the Holy Ghost upon them. To some of you I can even recal to mind what I said on some former occasions with regard to the religious condition of the Jewish and the Heathen world; especially the national institutions at Jerusalem, and the various sects of the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Herodians, Samaritans, Scribes, and others, which formed the materials for the first preachers of Christianity to work upon. On the day of Pentecost, when St. Peter had to execute his high commission, not only must we consider all those sects, as forming part of the population of Jerusalem, but also those Jews “from every nation under hea-

ven," who, through a spirit of devotion, thought it proper to repair to the temple, had assembled to celebrate the festival; and it was on this remarkable occasion, as you know, that no less than three thousand souls were added to the apostles and the brethren. There is an intimation, that previously to this period the number of the disciples in all was five hundred; so that we now see the full extent of the Christian community to which the words I have read to you are to be applied—"They continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." We here have the first regular appearance of a Christian Church, for by that term it is designated in the last verse of the same chapter—"the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."

Although it was afterwards found necessary, on account of the great increase of the disciples, and for the better administration of their resources, to make additional regulations in the government of this Church, still we have, in the simple declaration of the text, the Church of Christ set forth in the full possession of all the privileges of the Gospel, and of it there are four characteristics: first, the apostles' doctrine: secondly, the fellowship with them, and with one another: thirdly, the ordinance of breaking of bread: and fourthly, prayer or public worship. To all these things

the members of this first visible Church strictly adhered ; for the words “ they continued steadfastly ” must be understood to apply to all the four particulars. No one will attempt to deny that these were intended to be the characteristics of Christ’s Church in every age and in every part of the world, consequently they must be of universal application. The question therefore is, not—are they necessary to constitute a Christian Church? but it is—in what, at this period of the world, do they consist? And with regard to the first points, we must know where to find the apostles’ doctrine, otherwise we cannot pretend to adhere to what they taught. It happens, however, that the very sermon which St. Peter preached to the first converts, has come down to us in the written word of God ; if, therefore, we had no other words but these, we have the doctrine and the appeal to the conscience which converted in one day three thousand souls. It is indeed said that, “ with many other words did the apostle testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation ; ” but I apprehend the exhortations were not more earnest and numerous, nor the testimonies more sure, than are to be found in those writings which form the canon of the New Testament ; nor had the speech and preaching of St. Paul yet been heard, “ in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,” so that



we may say, with reference to those first converts, we have even more of the apostles' doctrine than they had, and it is more fully developed. I cannot do more on the present occasion, than recapitulate and compare the principles of Christian doctrine, as declared in other places of God's word, with those in which this primitive Church is said to have continued stedfastly. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews enumerates the elements of Christian doctrine in the following order: "Laying the foundation of repentance from dead works; faith towards God; the doctrine of baptism; the laying on of hands; the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. Now if these principles, which were taught by St. Paul, are found to agree with the teaching of Peter, who was the apostle of the circumcision, it is clear we have the acknowledged and undoubted doctrine of the apostles as the primitive Church received it. Consider then, for a moment, the words of St. Peter, and you will find out of the six principles mentioned by Paul, four most plainly to be set forth. For when conviction was wrought in the hearts of those three thousand, and they said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, who had equal authority to answer them, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said unto them, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ,

for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” In this comprehensive answer are taught the doctrines of “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins:”—the doctrine of baptism is set forth as the initiative rite of admission into the body of Christ’s Church, spiritually signifying the death unto sin, as it is written—“Being buried with Christ by baptism into death.” And fourthly, “the gift of the Holy Ghost,” which was conferred by the laying on of hands by the apostles—spiritually, the real possession of the heart by the Divine influence; and so far there is a perfect agreement in Christian Doctrine as preached by the two apostles. As to the other two points, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment, they had been sufficiently pointed out, whilst Peter was proving that the body of Jesus did not see corruption in the grave. When, however, the same apostle instructed the first Gentile convert in the true faith, he testified that this Jesus, whom God had raised up the third day, was ordained of God to be the Judge of the quick and the dead. And thus I conceive we know, to all intents and purposes, what the apostles’ doctrine is<sup>1</sup>, as well as those converts on the day of Pentecost.

<sup>1</sup> Although there can be no doubt that the apostles believed every article contained in that confession of faith called the

The second grand feature in this new society is the fellowship of its members with the apostles as their spiritual guides, and with one another as brethren in the same cause. We are to recollect that the new converts were all Jews, devout men out of every nation under heaven : they had come to Jerusalem for the purpose of celebrating a national festival, and in the ordinary course of

Apostles' Creed, it did not appear in its entire form, as we have it, until towards the very end of the fourth century, and even then not universally. (See *Pearson's Notes upon the Exposition of the Creed*, Vol. II. p. 52 ; new 8vo. edit. *ibid.* p. 277.) The two most ancient creeds extant are found in Irenæus and Tertullian ; they do not, however, contain so many points of Christian doctrine as may be gathered from St. Peter's sermon and St. Paul's elements. Irenæus is more diffuse upon the article of Christ's power in judging men and rebel angels ; but his creed is essentially the same as Tertullian's, which is as follows : Unicum quidem Deum credimus sub hac tamen conditione, quam œconomiam dicimus, ut unici Dei sit et Filius, Sermo ipsius, qui ex ipso processerit, per quem omnia facta sunt, et sine quo factum est nihil : hunc missum a Patre in Virginem, et ex ea natum hominem et Deum, filium hominis et filium Dei, et cognominatum Jesum Christum ; hunc passum, hunc mortuum et sepultum secundum Scripturas et resuscitatum a Patre et in cœlos resumptum sedere ad dexteram Patris, venturum judicare vivos et mortuos ; qui exinde miserit, secundum promissionem suam, a Patre Spiritum Sanctum Paracletum, sanctificatorem fidei eorum qui credunt in Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum. *Advers. Præxam*, s. 2. See *Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiast. Hist.* Book II. p. 2. Vol. II. p. 26.

things, after they had paid their vows, they would doubtless have returned to their respective homes; but an influence, such as they little expected, had taken possession of their minds, they desired to remain together for their mutual edification and support, “provoking one another to love and to good works:” they did not, therefore, disperse themselves abroad, but “continued stedfastly” in this Christian fellowship. This fellowship did not merely consist in the outward forms which held the society together, for these they had previously to their becoming Christians; they had been in “the temple with one accord,” and uniting in the public worship (for they were devout men), they had exhibited an external communion; but it was not “the communion of saints.” There wanted some more secret tie, some secret influence which should knit together their hearts in love; for truly says an apostle, “our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;” and so powerful was the heavenly bond which united the believing thousands, that “the multitude of them were of one heart and of one soul.”

The forming of these primitive believers into one body implies an appointed discipline to be duly observed in constituting the visible Church of Christ. We are not here informed, indeed, what that form of discipline was, and it is evident

that it must change with circumstances ; but the spiritual bond of union must ever be the same. If therefore we would seek for this second characteristic of the primitive Church, which is implied in the apostles' fellowship, we must look to the principles of Christian doctrine, rather than to the form of Church government ; and if we find the former inculcated agreeably to the word of God, there will be our fellowship with the apostles ; for although the blessed apostles are dead, and we can have no visible fellowship with them, yet Christ has promised to be with them in their successors to the end of the world. Now their successors are those who preach their doctrine, and the doctrine taught by them is no where to be found but in the holy Scriptures ; and only where those Scriptures are purely preached and humbly received is there fellowship. “ We must attach ourselves,” says Eusebius, “ to those things which are delivered in the Scriptures, but not search into those which are not established in the word of God ; because the Holy Spirit would have put them in the Scriptures, if it had been necessary for us to have known them, and we must not imagine ourselves to be wiser than the Holy Spirit : if certain things are not written, they must not be even mentioned, whilst on the other hand it is criminal to efface those which are

written, for we are not masters but disciples<sup>1</sup>. At this early stage of Christianity the apostles had no leisure to impress that form of government upon the visible Church, which they intended to be permanent: the fellowship here mentioned partakes more of the nature of social and spiritual intercourse than of ecclesiastical authority. It therefore leaves the question of the Episcopacy and the Presbytery, and the whole subject of ecclesiastical polity untouched, as we are content to leave it on this occasion<sup>2</sup>. Whatever provisional rules and regulations were adopted for keeping together this first Christian community, we are assured they were neither arbitrary nor oppressive. And except in the instance of St. Peter, who once attempted to compel “the Gentiles to live as did the Jews<sup>3</sup>,” we never find the

<sup>1</sup> Euseb. advers. Sabellium.—Vide *Sismond. varia Opera*, tom. I. p. 18. *Edit. Parisiis*, 1696, in v. tom. fol.

<sup>2</sup> “That matters of Church polity are different from matters of faith and salvation,” is shown by Hooker in the third Book of his “*Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*,” still we are at liberty to plead for that which is the best, the most scriptural, and the most ancient form of Church government—which is doubtless the episcopal form—yet we do not say it is necessary to salvation to belong to an Episcopal Church, only it is a safe thing; but we do say it is necessary to salvation to continue stedfastly in the Apostles’ doctrines.

<sup>3</sup> Some Nazarine Christians (propagated from the error of

least disposition in the apostles to lord it over God's heritage ; but the infant Church, in this respect, affords a glorious example both to ecclesiastical governors and the governed, for they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and the apostles administered all things to their joy and contentment. We come now to the third characteristic—they continued “in breaking of bread :” this expression, some think, does not necessarily imply the celebration of the Eucharist. The early Christians had their “Agapæ,” or feasts of charity, which consisted in taking a common meal together, accompanied by prayer and thanksgiving. Of these very first converts, it is said, that “breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart.” This is, no doubt, an allusion to the daily feasts of charity ; but our expression implies something more, and no mischief can ever possibly arise from a full and fair interpretation of the words of Scripture. “The bread which we break,” says Paul, “is it not the communion of the body of Christ ?” What then can this “breaking of bread,” in which the primitive Church continued, be, except

St. Peter) existed at the commencement of the fifth century, which caused Augustin to accuse the apostle of being the founder of a heresy !—*S. August. de Baptismo contra Donatistas*, lib. 7.

it be the celebration of the Lord's Supper<sup>1</sup>? The due administration of the Sacrament is therefore a necessary mark of the visible Church of Christ. Fourthly, they continued in prayers, that is, they had meetings for public worship. These and the celebration of the Sacraments, according to Christ's institution, being visible and outward acts, make the Assembly or Church, wherever it is planted, visible to all men; and agreeably to all these things, our reformers defined the visible Church of Christ to be "a congregation of faithful men in which the pure word of God is preached,"—viz. the apostles' doctrine and fellowship we have explained, "and the sacraments be duly ministered, according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same," that is,

<sup>1</sup> Some Protestant divines are afraid to admit "the breaking of bread" here mentioned to be the Eucharist, lest it should be turned into an argument for administering the communion to the laity under one kind only! The Jews began the meal with the act of breaking of bread, but Dr. Lightfoot never found in the Talmudists that כציעה *breaking of bread* denoted the whole meal.—See *Hebrew and Talmudical Exercitat.* vol. II. p. 648. The account which Justin Martyr gives of a Christian assembly in his time (not half a century after the apostles) decides the question: he represents the Eucharist as forming a necessary part of Divine Service at all times, and describes the use of bread and wine mingled with water.—*Justin Mart. pro Christian. Apol. II.*



the breaking of bread and prayers—and no one is properly a member of this visible Church who does not thus join in her public worship and her ordinances. No reason for such non-conformity can be considered valid, except it can be shown that such ordinances and worship are contrary to the apostles' doctrine and discipline; for if it be admitted they are not, then the scruples which give rise to it, may be ascribed to weakness, pride, or evil works, a spirit of schism, or regard to useless distinctions. The apostles' doctrine is always the same; it therefore admits of no compromise: their discipline varied according to circumstances, and although in successive ages and in different nations it has been altered, yet can it never be so changed as to militate against any thing the apostles expressly ordained as a lasting regulation<sup>1</sup>, by the power of binding and loosing on earth, which on another occasion we shall have more fully to explain. And such, brethren, are the observations I would offer for your improvement on the formation of the first Christian Church at Jerusalem.

It presents to us a body of people separated

“Besides, in the matter of external discipline, or regiment in itself, we do not deny but there are some things whereto the Church is bound till the world's end. So as the question is only, how far the bounds of the Church's liberty do reach.”  
*Hooker's Ecclesiast. Polity*, Book iii. sect. 10.

from the rest of their countrymen and adopting a new religion, which struck at the root of every prejudice, and entirely changed the way of life to which they had been accustomed : there was of course a great outcry raised against them by the rulers and priests of the Jewish Church : they were called a sect, or heresy, disturbers of the peace, seditious, and what not : the high-priest and those that were with him, were filled with indignation at them ; and it was easy to foresee the storm that was gathering over them, which, if they had not looked to the promise of their Redeemer, might have overwhelmed them with destruction and despair. Their numbers, however, seem to have increased rapidly in a few days, for after Peter and John had healed the lame man at the temple, it is said the number of the men was about five thousand. And again it is said, that believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women : it is further intimated that the number of disciples was so multiplied, that the apostles themselves could no longer attend sufficiently to the administration of the resources contributed for the support of the needy ; and it is said again, that the word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. It would not be too much to suppose from these

several intimations, that before the persecution arose in which Stephen suffered, there were not less than 15,000 persons professing the Christian Religion, most of them at Jerusalem. Such an occurrence as this, considered merely in the light of an historical fact, is unparalleled in the annals of mankind : that within a few days no inconsiderable portion of the population of a city should, by the mere force of argument and persuasion, change their habits of life and their religion, in opposition to all established institutions, and at the risk of losing their personal liberty and their lives. I offer this as an undeniable proof of the Divine origin of Christianity, and as a mighty example of the power of the Holy Ghost upon the human heart.

In consequence of this great increase of believers, the apostles found it necessary to institute a new order of ministers in the Church, whose office should be to attend to the wants of the poor. Seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom, were proposed by the people as the candidates for this new office, and accordingly, by the imposition of hands, the apostles ordained them in the presence of the congregation. Upon the appointment of those seven men, whose names have come down to us, and who, from their office of serving or administering, were called deacons, we have to remark two

things : first, the apostles consulted the whole body of the Church upon the choice of those men, and it is expressly said, the multitude chose them, and then brought them to the apostles; and secondly, there was a remarkable liberality displayed in making the selection; for the murmuring arose on the part of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration; and when they came to choose persons to attend to the general wants of the community, the Hebrews, who must have formed the great majority, allowed the deacons chosen to be all Greeks; thus showing their desire to concede every advantage to the party who thought themselves aggrieved; in which proceeding there is something well worthy our imitation and attention. The deacons were not confined to the mere labour of serving tables; they had authority to preach the word of God also. Of two of these only we particularly know the acts—viz. Stephen and Philip. Some, indeed, suppose that Nicolas, the proselyte of Antioch, was afterwards the author of that sect of the Nicolaitanes<sup>1</sup>, which St. John so severely rebukes in the Apocalypse; but I can hardly think that a man who was said by Divine inspiration to be “full of the Holy Ghost and of

<sup>1</sup> *Euseb. Ecclesiast. Hist.* lib. iii. cap. 29.

wisdom," could have ever fallen into such depths of sin and error. The time had now arrived when these words of Christ were to be fulfilled and brought to the minds of the disciples: "You shall be hated of all men for my name's sake, and you shall be brought before kings and rulers." "They shall put you out of the synagogue: yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." Persecution has generally been employed on the side which is conscious of the feebleness of its cause; and it is difficult in any case to be intolerant towards the opinions of others, without also exercising violence if we had it in our power so to do. Thus it was, that when the Egyptian and Asiatic Jews, unable to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake, when in the synagogue, Philip, the deacon, had disputed with them, were foiled in reason and argument, they had recourse to the secular arm, alleging, no doubt, that such a man as Stephen would disturb the unity and peace of their religion, violate every thing that ought to be held sacred, and finally overturn their venerable institutions; they therefore accused him at once of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and against God. The issue of this unjust accusation you are all acquainted with: "they stoned Stephen, calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive

my soul.” With the death of Stephen closes the first year of the sacred narrative, and we are brought to the year 34 of the Christian era, according to the received chronology. This is a distinguished epoch in the history of the infant Church : it marks the rise of those persecutions which began to scatter abroad the happy society at Jerusalem. No longer are they permitted, as before, to “ break bread from house to house,” or to assemble together in peace to edify one another, or to sing the praises of Him who redeemed them with his own blood : already the same weapons which struck the Shepherd, are raised against the flock, and Saul of Tarsus, in all the fury of misapplied zeal, is preparing to drag them, both men and women, to prison. St. Stephen had just left them a noble example of Christian courage in death, and little did the proto-martyr think that the young man who kept the clothes of his executioners was ordained to become the future apostle of the Gentiles. The violence of this first persecution was such as to disperse the believers abroad throughout all Judea and Samaria, the apostles only, and probably a few others with them, remaining at Jerusalem. The undaunted resolution of these holy men is not less remarkable than the Providence which shielded them, and preserved their lives in the midst of their enemies : the rulers of the syna-

gogue appear to have followed the advice of Gamaliel with regard to the apostles, and the miraculous interposition in favour of St. Peter, which they had witnessed, perhaps insured, through a salutary fear, respect for the persons of himself and his associates.

But that which might seem to the limited views of men as an irreparable injury to the Church was, in fact, the very cause of its prosperity; for it is said, “they that were scattered abroad, went every where preaching the word.” The success which attended the preaching of Philip is especially remarked by the historian: he was the means of planting the Gospel in the district of Samaria, and of sending the glad tidings to the distant country of Ethiopia; and after being thus blessed in his ministry, he was found in a city on the sea coast (the Ashdod of the Philistines), and passing through those parts, he preached in all the cities till he arrived at Cæsarea, which was to become his permanent residence. The news of Samaria having received the word of God was conveyed to the apostles at Jerusalem, and they immediately dispatched two of their number—viz. Peter and John—to do the offices for which Philip was not duly qualified: they laid their hands on the new converts, who received the Holy Ghost. In returning to Jerusalem they took the opportunity of preaching the

Gospel in many villages of the Samaritans ; and these were the principal transactions of the second year in the Scripture narrative.

The persecution which began with the martyrdom of St. Stephen lasted nearly five years ; that is, until the year 39 (the conversion of St. Paul having taken place in the second year of it, the year 35). It was terminated by a circumstance which at first view might seem totally unconnected with the Church of Christ, but which, in fact, is a striking instance of the manner in which, unknown to men, the Lord maketh all things subservient to his will. It happened at this period, that a person named Capito, of mean condition and depraved morals, came into Judea, to collect the tribute for the Romans<sup>1</sup> : at a town called Jamnia, not far from Azotus, he induced some strangers to erect an altar to the Roman emperor, to which divine honors were to be paid by the Jewish inhabitants. Capito was aware that this insult to the national religion would give him an opportunity of reporting to the emperor an act of rebellion in the province, which would be at the same time a cloak to his plunder, and a step in the imperial favour. The Jews pulled down the altar

<sup>1</sup> These particulars, which illustrate the “ Acts of the Apostles,” are found in Philo Judæus, a cotemporary historian, and in the “ Wars” of Josephus—but see *Fleury, Histoire Ecclesiastique*, lib. xi. chap. 18.



at Jamnia, and Caligula, who was then at the height of his blasphemous folly, resenting this insult to his pretended divinity, by a severe mandate, sent an order to Petronius, governor of Judea, to require that, in the room of the altar torn down at Jamnia, a colossal statue should be erected to his honour and worship in the temple at Jerusalem. This involved the Jews in great trouble with the Roman governor, and in the midst of such calamities, they found themselves engaged with other occupations than that of persecuting the Christians. This profanation of the temple was averted by the seasonable death of that abandoned emperor<sup>1</sup>; but the Jews had not less experienced a time of national distress, and they ceased to disturb or harass the flock of Christ. Of the state of the Christian world at this period, we have only this short account handed down in the holy Scriptures: “Then had the Churches rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied,” which serves to mark the extent of the Christian profession in the year 39; and here for the first time we have

<sup>1</sup> Sub Tiberio quies: dein jussi à C. Cæsare effigiem ejus in templo locare, arma potius sumpsêre: quem motum Cæsaris mors diremit. *Tacitus, Historiar. lib. v. c. 19.*

mention of Churches. We discover, therefore, that although the many thousands of believers in the city of Jerusalem, who assembled in different congregations, were considered as one Church, yet when societies of Christians were formed in the distant cities of Palestine, they were considered as distinct Churches : and even believers in the house of a private individual were called a Church, as the Church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, the Church in the house of Philemon and others; and all these, in whatever part of the world they might be, formed the Catholic<sup>1</sup> or universal Church, being all united in the same faith and under the same head, Christ Jesus ; but it was not necessary they should all adopt the same order of discipline, or even so much as communicate with each other on ecclesiastical forms and non-essential questions : “ my sentence is,” says St. James, in the apostolic synod, “ that we trouble not them which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.” The Churches in Palestine were visited by St. Peter especially, because he was the apostle of the circumcision :

<sup>1</sup> The word “ Catholic ” was not originally in the creeds of the western Churches ; the ninth article in the Apostles’ Creed was simply “ Credo in Sanctam Ecclesiam.” The “ Roman Church ” borrowed the word “ Catholic ” from the oriental creed, in which it was very anciently used. See *Pearson’s Exposition*, &c. Vol. II. notes, p. 408.

it is written of him, that he passed through all quarters, that is through the three districts above named, where Christianity was spread, and he finally arrived at the saints which were at Lydda, and remained at Joppa until he had executed the rest of his high commission, with which our Lord had entrusted him. This shall form part of the subject of our next lecture.

We have thus, my brethren, taken a view of the first Christian Church established at Jerusalem, and of the dispersion of the disciples consequent upon the martyrdom of St. Stephen, and the substance of what we have said you will find recorded in the first nine chapters of the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

It is important for us, who have the knowledge of these great truths, to examine ourselves by the model herein exhibited of the primitive doctrines, and see whether we be in the faith which was once delivered to the saints. A profession of this faith is easily made, and we may glory in a name, and boast of belonging to a Church which continues in the “apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers ;” but it is another thing so to have really imbibed the principle of that heavenly doctrine, as to say it has taken hold upon our hearts and affections. It ought to be a subject of our solemn inquiry, in order that we may ascertain whether we have

laid the foundation “ of repentance from dead works,” as those believers did, who, being pricked in their hearts, exclaimed, “ men and brethren, what shall we do ?” This is the conviction of guilt which reduces the sinner to the alternative of meeting his Judge without his Advocate Christ Jesus, or seeking the reconciliation which has been effected through the cross. Close upon this conviction follows a second inquiry, viz.—Whether that gift of a holy and operative faith, which worketh in the soul by love, has been so received that with the new converts at Jerusalem, we may trust in the name of Jesus, and that alone, for the remission of sins ? They, you will observe, trusted to no other source : they made mention of no righteousness of their own, although they had been devout men ; but they were only strong in the strength of their Redeemer : whatever room there had been found for boasting in a previous righteousness, there was none to be discovered, according to the reasoning of Paul, in the law of faith. But what simplicity and singleness of heart, what joy and peace in believing, did these first-fruits of the Gospel harvest experience ; and is it no longer possible for those, who hear the same glad tidings of salvation, to have a like spirit ? Surely it is, if we continue, as they did, stedfastly in the doctrine of Jesus Christ ; if we, like them, praise our God daily, and cleave unto

the Redeemer with full purpose of heart : this is to become a member of the real Church, and none but characters such as these compose the living Church of Christ ; for He hath ransomed the Church, and bought it with his own blood, even those who are his peculiar people, being “ zealous of good works.” His blood avails not for those who never laid the foundation of repentance from dead works, nor faith towards God. Why should we deceive ourselves ? Talk we of the Church with a name to live, whilst we are spiritually dead ? To what purpose do we flatter ourselves with our national and religious privileges, if we have not received and embraced the truth as it is in Jesus ? We are indeed outwardly in full possession of all the privileges of the New Testament ; we have in our hands the apostles’ doctrine, of which so many of our fellow-creatures are unfortunately deprived ; but if we receive not the doctrine into our hearts, and it becomes not the rule of our lives, then do we but resemble those inhabitants of Jerusalem, who heard the doctrine, but mocking said, “ these men are full of new wine.” For let us observe, that if the doctrines of the Gospel be not cordially embraced in the full sense of “ an inward and spiritual grace,” they are generally despised along with those who preach them ; but such as do not so embrace the doctrine, are not of the Church of

Christ, by whatever name they may be called ; neither shall we be so, unless we have the characteristics of the real Christian.

But, my brethren, in the more general view of the Church of God, in reliance upon His glorious promises, we have a right to hope, notwithstanding the gloomy aspect of the times, that a day will come when it shall be said of the Churches throughout the world, as it was said of those in Judea and Galilee and Samaria : they have rest from all troubles without, they are edified, they walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Here, brethren, are exhibited the unity of spirit, the bond of peace, and the righteousness of life ; and it is only when all those who profess and call themselves Christians, shall walk according to this rule, that we can expect a similar unity : in the mean time, it behoves us who profess to be members of the holy Catholic Church, and are in possession of the oracles of truth, to promote and exhibit to the world an example of that godly unity and brotherly love, which are the fruits of Christ dwelling richly in the heart in all wisdom. It is our duty, because Christ requires it of us : it is our duty, because the times and the seasons call aloud for it ; for who are they who must fight the Lord's battles, and proclaim the reign of peace, but those who have already felt and tasted

the blessings of it? Who are they who must diffuse the apostles' doctrine wherever a door is open, except those who know what that doctrine is, and have had the privilege of being born in a country where it is freely disseminated? Upon many of you who hear me in this place, brethren, a great responsibility rests, because by the manner in which you shall exhibit the apostles' doctrine, either by precept or example, may depend the decision of thousands. You are in that station of life which increases your responsibility and your duties, and when ye are dispersed throughout those places, where there is an access given to the word of God—dispersed, not, fortunately, by such a persecution as vexed the Church at Jerusalem; but under circumstances exceedingly favourable to the cause of Truth, you will, if you feel the blessings of grace upon your hearts, tell to others perishing with hunger what great things the Lord hath done for you; and thus will ye “let your light so shine before men that they, seeing your good works,” may “glorify your Father which is in heaven.” In all our speculations then upon the future destiny of the nations, let us ever keep in view the great promise, referring every event, under Providence, and every great change in the institutions of mankind, to the same; viz. “that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the

waters cover the channels of the deep ;” and in this holy confidence may we every one of us use the comprehensive supplication, “ thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”



## LECTURE II.

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THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH FROM THE ENDING  
OF THE FIRST PERSECUTION [A.D. 39] TO THE  
APOSTOLIC COUNCIL HELD AT JERUSALEM IN  
THE YEAR 49, INCLUDING THE OPENING OF THE  
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN TO THE GENTILES BY ST.  
PETER.

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ST. MATTHEW xvi. 16, 17, 18, 19.

*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.*

It is evident, from the whole tenor of the Acts of the Apostles, that the Holy Ghost was the sole

efficient agent in propagating the Gospel of Christ, insomuch that the first rapid spread of Christianity was nothing more than a signal display of His influence upon the human mind : it was intended thereby to show to all succeeding generations, that whatever success might attend the preaching of the Gospel, wherever hardness of heart and contempt of God's word were overcome, in whatever soul the principle of faith and a simple dependence upon Christ crucified was planted, it was ever to be attributed to the agency of the Holy Spirit. If any preconceived notion were to be removed from the minds of the apostles, if any prejudice were to be eradicated, the Holy Ghost was the immediate Power by whom it was to be effected. But notwithstanding they were under the powerful influence of the Spirit, they were men "subject to like passions as we are," yet being sensible of the wonders which God had wrought in them and by them, on the day of Pentecost, at Jerusalem, they could not reasonably doubt that they were moved of the Holy Ghost ; still it required a miraculous vision to convince St. Peter of what might have seemed before consistent with the mercy of God, viz. that the Gentiles also (as well as the Jews) were to be partakers of the blessings of the Gospel.

Of those who were scattered abroad about the persecution of Stephen, we have seen how Philip

the deacon went down to Samaria and preached Christ unto them, and afterwards converted the eunuch of Ethiopia. Of the others it is said, that they travelled as far as Phœnice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. Nearly three years, therefore, elapsed from the celebrated day of Pentecost, before the apostles were suffered to make a single Heathen convert in any part of the world. That convert was, as you know, a Roman soldier of the rank of a centurion, a man whose fervent devotion and good works showed beforehand the teachable disposition of his mind. As this was (to use the language of Scripture) the opening of a great and effectual door, the grand revelation of the mystery which had been kept secret from the Jews since the world began, it forms another most important epoch in the history of Christianity ; and as the principles on which the Heathen were admitted to the privileges of believers, were substantially the same as those which applied to the Jews, it is necessary to have a clear understanding as to what those principles were, in order that we may know the foundation on which stands the Church of Christ, in its universal character.

The apostle chosen for making known this universality of the Gospel was St. Peter. “ Men and brethren,” said he, in the synod of Jerusalem,

“ ye know that, a good while ago, God made choice among us that the Gentiles, by my mouth, should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe.” We have already had occasion to remark how this same Peter preached the glad tidings of salvation, first to the Jews only : and in like manner how he opened the kingdom of heaven both to the Jewish and the Heathen world. This brings me to the portion of Scripture which has just been read to you from St. Matthew’s Gospel, the force and propriety of which words of our Lord will be more apparent, when compared with the sacred narrative.

After our blessed Lord had been some time engaged in His ministry on earth, He took an opportunity of asking His disciples what men said of Him, and whom they judged Him to be ? They told Him in answer, that they had heard some call Him John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He then put that question for the trial of their faith, which stands upon record for our admonition, Whom say ye that I am ? St. Peter was enabled to bear that enlightened testimony which was ever after to be the test of a real faith, “ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The reply of our Lord amply confirms what has just been observed, viz. that all true Christianity in the heart is the work of the Holy Spirit : flesh

and blood did not reveal this great truth to Peter, “but,” saith the Redeemer, “my Father which is in heaven.” Our Lord, who knew the personal qualifications, as well as the hearts of all His disciples, had foreseen that Simon, the son of Jona, was of that ardent and zealous character which, although it sometimes might lead him into grievous error, would be most essential on many occasions where the Gospel was to be proclaimed. He, therefore, gave him a name, in the first instance, significative of his firmness and boldness : thou shalt be called Cephas, He says, which is by interpretation, a stone ; or, as it would be more strictly rendered by interpretation, Peter ; for Peter does not exactly signify a stone, but is as near as the proper termination of a masculine noun will come to the word stone<sup>1</sup>. It was customary both among the Jews and Heathens to superadd to their proper names such titles as designated

<sup>1</sup> Do the holy penmen of the Scriptures make Lexicons, says Dr. Lightfoot, or play the schoolmaster, that they should only teach that the Syriac word Cepha in the Greek language signifies πέτρα, a stone ; and Tabitha, Dorcas, that is, a goat ? No, rather they teach what Greek proper name answers to those Syriac proper names. (*Talmudical Exercitat. upon John.* Chap. i. v. 42.) Our translation, therefore, ought not to have been “a stone,” but *Peter*. It is only in the French language, as Mr. Gibbon observed, that the sound is perfect, “tu es Pierre et sur cette Pierre.”

either their peculiarities of mind and body, or the acts by which any one had distinguished himself; to the classical reader this must be well known. In the Bible there are numerous instances, and our Lord adopted the same custom with regard to his apostles. John is generally called the beloved, on account, no doubt, of his affectionate disposition: at a later period he was emphatically called “the elder.” James, the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, were surnamed by our Lord, Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder, in allusion perhaps to their powerful manner of speaking. And not improbably the rest of the apostles had all some special designation of this nature; and so Simon Bar-jona, that is son of Jona, was surnamed Cephas in the Syriac, and Petros in the Greek, in allusion to the zeal and natural firmness of his character. The Redeemer, therefore, about to confer an office upon him, in the execution of which, his zeal and firmness would be called into action, reminds him first of the expressive name he had given him, “I say unto thee that thou art Peter,” and having made this noble confession of the faith, which is the foundation of my religion, upon this, as the rock stone, I will build my Church. He saith not, I build it now, but He promises what He will do at a future time, and that time was to be when St. Peter executed the

high commission with which he was intrusted. “ Upon this rock that thou hast confessed,” said Jesus Christ to Peter, (such is the interpretation of St. Augustine<sup>1</sup>), “ upon this rock that thou hast known by saying, Thou art Christ the Son of the living God, I will build my Church, that is to say, upon Myself, who am the Christ of the living God : I will build upon Myself and not upon thee, for those men who sought to build upon men, said I am of Paul, I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, which is Peter ; but they who would not be built upon Peter, but upon the rock, said, but I am of Christ. And the apostle Paul, seeing that they would choose him and neglect Christ, said, is Christ divided ? Has Paul been crucified for you, or have you been baptized in the name of Paul ? And it has not been in the name of Paul, neither has it been in the name of Peter, but in the name of Christ, in order that Peter should be built upon the rock, and not the rock upon Peter.” In the same spirit, and nearly in the language of St. Augustine, one of our eminent reformers and martyrs spoke before his judges, “ This is the foundation and beginning of all Christianity, with word, heart, and mind, to confess that Christ is the Son of God. Whosoever believeth not this, Christ is not in him,

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Augustin. Opera*, Serm. lxxvi. in Tom. V. par. i. p. 415. Edit. Paris, 1683. Distrib. in xii. tom. folio.

and he is not in Christ. Therefore Christ said to Peter, that upon this rock, that is, upon his confession, that he was the Christ the Son of God, he would build his Church, in order to declare that without this faith, no man can come to Christ; so that this belief, that Christ is the Son of God, is the foundation of our Christianity, and the foundation of our Church. Here you see upon what foundation Christ's Church is built, not upon the frailty of man, but upon the stable and infallible word of God<sup>1</sup>." As the apostles were the first propagators of this great doctrine, so they were the first stones laid upon the foundation of the spiritual building, and to this building every lively member of Christ's Church is added in order, nor is there any thing more beautiful to behold than it is, when fitly framed together. St. Paul gives this animated description of it: "Now, therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, in Whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth into an holy temple in the Lord. In whom ye also are builded together

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Ridley's defence before the commission at Oxford, September 30th, 1555. See Wordsworth's Ecclesiastical Biography, Vol. III.



for an habitation of God through the Spirit." This, my brethren, is worthy of our best attention, let us not trouble ourselves with other foundations on which some build ; nor with the combustible materials which others lay upon a right foundation, but let this be our care, to ascertain whether we form a part of that spiritual edifice, which the apostle describes as built on Christ, and as an habitation for the Spirit of God in our hearts ; and thus much we have to say concerning the rock and the building which Jesus declared he would rear so firmly, that the powers of hell and darkness should never prevail against it. We shall now endeavour to explain in what sense St. Peter received the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and then compare the manner in which he discharged his high functions.

To open the door of faith and to enter into the fold by the door, and such like metaphor, is familiar to every reader of the Scriptures, and when any soul hath so entered in, and become a faithful subject of the king Messiah, he hath entered into His kingdom, which is not of this world but of heaven,—there is only one way by which any one may so enter. And this is proclaimed by the Redeemer himself, who saith, " I am the way, the truth, and the life." It pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe ; that is to say, the instru-

ment by which the kingdom of God is opened, is the preaching of the word : this is the blessed key of truth. Our Lord on one occasion thus rebukes the Jewish teachers, “ Woe unto you lawyers, for ye have taken away the key of knowledge ; ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered :” but to St. Peter he saith, I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Those lawyers whom Christ rebukes, had taken away the key, that is, they kept the oracles of God to themselves, (they permitted not the people to see them, they dealt out sparingly as much of them as they thought proper, and if any one attempted to go beyond what they were pleased to dictate—them they hindered from entering into the truth.) Far otherwise did Peter act ; far otherwise did he use the keys with which he was entrusted ; he opened liberally and fully the truth as it is in Jesus. It was an honour which the Saviour had conferred upon him, “ to handsel,” as Tertullian saith, “ the first key<sup>1</sup>,” and to which he alluded with pious delight in the synod at Jerusalem ;

<sup>1</sup> Qualis es evertens atque commutans manifestam Domini intencionem personaliter hoc Petro conferentem. Super te, inquit, ædificabo Ecclesiam meam et dabo tibi claves, non Ecclesiæ, sic enim et exitus docet : in ipso Ecclesia exstructa est, id est, per ipsum, *ipse clavem imbuit.* *Tertullian. de Pud.* cap. 21.

but this brings us to the Scripture narrative, to see the prominent part he took in establishing Christ's Church upon the rock of ages : I shall merely recur to the sermon on the day of Pentecost, for the purpose of pointing out the boldness and fidelity of Peter. Standing up with the eleven, he had the courage to lift up his voice against the mocking multitude, and after reasoning from the prophets, and making use of the Hebrew Scriptures, you will observe, he came to that very conclusion which constituted his enlightened testimony to his Lord and Master. "Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ : " when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart. It will be enough to compare this with Peter's confession, to judge of the foundation on which the first assembly of believing Jews was built ; and thus St. Peter opened the kingdom of heaven to the dwellers at Jerusalem. In effecting this, he made free use of the Scriptures ; for, be it remarked, that his sermon, to prove that Jesus was the Christ, is all grounded upon the prophets and the Psalms ; and so he used well the keys of the kingdom of heaven. After this, in conjunction with all the apostles, he ceased not to exhort the people to search the Scriptures, for they alone were the infallible guides to testify of Jesus

Christ : much more do we say to you, brethren, search the Scriptures, for in them ye have eternal life set forth.

I now recall to your recollection the state of the Christian Church after the dispersion of the disciples about the death of Stephen, when as yet the Gentiles were not admitted to the privilege of believing. It will not be forgotten that St. Paul, who was the chosen vessel for carrying this mighty purpose into effect, was converted in the second year of the persecution [A. D. 35]. And at the same time that he, the apostle of the Gentiles, (whose labours will form the subject of our ensuing lectures) was preparing himself for the great work designed for him, St. Peter was again commanded “to open a door,” where he had least of all expected to find one. The Jews, as the favoured people of God, had the first offer of salvation tendered unto them ; and perhaps if the apostles had known in the first instance, that the Heathen were destined to be partakers of it, they might have been induced to have given up their fellow-countrymen before they had sufficiently exhorted them to enter into the kingdom. But by remaining at Jerusalem for nearly three years, and by the travels of those disciples who went into Asia preaching to none but the Jews only, we see the Divine purpose admirably accomplished—viz. that first of all the lost sheep of the

house of Israel were to be gathered into the fold. The time, however, speedily arrived wherein a new and wide field was to be laid open ; and if there be a time more delightful than another to the faithful ambassador of Christ, if there be a joy more pure, if there be a sight on earth more glorious, it is when the Lord in His wisdom and in His good providence opens a field of usefulness, which the obstinaey or hardness of the human heart, or any worldly circumstance, had kept closed ; and when He saith to the labourers, lift up your heads and look upon the fields, behold they are white already to harvest. Judge then, my brethren, of the joy felt by the apostles when Peter returned to Jerusalem with the news that the Holy Ghost had been granted to some Heathen converts : it was at first scarcely believed by the apostles and the brethren in Judea ; they could hardly extend their views commensurate with such abundant mercy ; but when they evidently saw the hand of God, when they heard the simple narration of St. Peter, they no longer contended against the sovereignty of God's grace ; “ they held their peace and glorified God, saying, then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”

Let us now see, for a moment, whether those first Gentile converts were built upon the same foundation as the Jews ; or, in other words, whe-

ther St. Peter executed his high commission as faithfully in the one case as in the other. Happily we can have recourse to his own words to Cornelius, showing how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, whom they slew and hanged on a tree ; whom God raised up the third day openly, and testifying that it was the same Jesus who was ordained to be the Judge of quick and dead ; “ to Him,” says the zealous apostle, “ give all the prophets witness, that through His name, whosoever believeth in Him, shall receive remission of sins :” and thus did Peter open the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles also. On his return to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, for having held intercourse with the Gentiles, but the bare recital of his vision, and the facts which followed upon it, abundantly justified his conduct in the sight of all the brethren ; and having now executed the commission entrusted to him, he took his place among the apostles at Jerusalem, from which time we hear no more of him for about the space of four years. We have thus endeavoured to illustrate the words of Christ, by examining the very acts to which they had reference. So far, therefore, as the former portion of our Lord’s address to St. Peter may seem to you to be satisfactorily explained, I would thus paraphrase the well known passage :

I say unto thee, that thou art Peter ; thou hast made this important confession of faith, which is the ground-work of my holy religion, and I therefore recal to thy mind the name which I gave thee, expressive of thy character and thy zeal for my cause, of which the present is a bright example ; I pronounce thee blessed in thy spiritual privileges, because no human wisdom or power hath effected this in thy soul, but only a Divine and spiritual agency : upon this foundation, this faith, that I, the Christ, am the Son of God, I will build up the whole body of believers, as it were into one edifice, glorious to behold, and lovely in the sight of heaven ; and this Church, which I have ransomed with my blood, shall stand firm upon this rock, throughout all time, in spite of the means which evil men and evil spirits shall employ against it : and forasmuch as thou art the first to make this unfeigned avowal of thy faith in me, I have reserved for thee an honour above the rest of the apostles, viz. that thou shalt preach my kingdom both to Jews and Gentiles, and shalt make, through thy preaching of the word, the first converts to the faith thou hast confessed : for this purpose I commit to thee the “ keys of knowledge, that when the proper time arrives, thou mayest open the kingdom of heaven, by the expounding of those Scriptures, which are the keys of that kingdom.” Such

was the discourse our Lord addressed to Peter exclusively, the rest of the commission equally regarded all the apostles : for it is said in the same Gospel, a little after, “ Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.” We shall be enabled to see the true meaning of these words also, by further attention to the apostolic narrative. Omitting for the present the labours of Paul and Barnabas, let us trace the remaining transactions of St. Peter.

In the year 41, which was the first of the emperor Claudius, and within two years after the first persecution had ceased, king Herod put to death St. James the elder, he who was the brother of John, and surnamed Boanerges : and seeing this was acceptable to the furious persecutors of the Church, he put Peter into prison, with the intent of bringing him forth to the people, at a fit opportunity, to be put to death publicly. His miraculous deliverance from prison, and the miserable end of the royal persecutor, are related in the twelfth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The next mention that is made of St. Peter is in the apostolic council held at Jerusalem in the year 48—49, and it is most probable that during this interval of seven years, he went to visit the different churches in Palestine, and, perhaps,



travelled as far as Antioch. There is not the most distant allusion to any circumstance which can justify the assertion that Peter had any pastoral charge of the churches of the Gentiles : Christ had committed to him the care of His lambs and His sheep, by which the apostle could only understand the sheep of Israel, for he knew not at that time that the Heathen would ever be called by that endearing title. “The Gospel of the circumcision was committed unto him, as the Gospel of the uncircumcision” was unto Paul, and, except in the case of opening the kingdom of heaven to the believing Gentiles, it is almost evident he had little to do with the Heathen world. No more mention is made of him in the sacred writings, except the notice which St. Paul (in his Epistle to the Galatians) takes of his being at Antioch. This period of Peter’s being at Antioch was at least seventeen years after St. Paul’s conversion, that is about the year 52, about which time we read that Paul and Barnabas “continued at Antioch.” The apostolic council took place about four years previously, therefore Peter was at Jerusalem in the year 48 ; he was thrown into prison by Herod in the year 41, or, as some will have it, in the year 44. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, says, he saw him at Jerusalem three years after his (Paul’s) return from Arabia ; that is, about the year 39.

Cornelius was converted by him in the year 36, until which period he had not left Jerusalem, except to visit the churches in Palestine. By these dates (all found in the Scripture account) we see, that from the day of Pentecost to the year 53, that is, a space of twenty years, the apostle laboured principally in the districts of Judea, and at Antioch, and if to this we add his travels in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, as it is fair to infer, from his epistle, he had been there<sup>1</sup>, we shall find his time entirely employed in the east, until the year 54, without the most distant intimation that he ever came into the west. The tradition at Antioch was, that Peter had some time governed their church; and if the accounts of some ecclesiastical writers be true, which however can with difficulty be reconciled with chronology, that St. Peter suffered martyrdom in the persecution set on foot at Rome by Nero in the year 64, then have we the last ten years of the apostle's life to account for, without any trace of him in the scriptures, or any intimation whither he went. The prediction of our Lord, however, with regard to his end, must be borne in mind, "When thou shalt be old thou shalt stretch forth thine hands, and another shall gird thee and carry thee whither thou wouldest

<sup>1</sup> Compare also *Eusebius Hist. Ecclesiast.* lib. iii. cap. 1.

not," which is not inconsistent with the tradition that St. Peter was crucified at Rome, as it is related by Eusebius and others<sup>1</sup>. Some also mention the martyrdom of his wife, who suffered before him<sup>2</sup>, from whose example he derived courage and consolation. You are not ignorant that [a more vague] tradition has pointed out the very spot on the mount Janiculum, where the memorable transaction is said to have taken place.

In order to illustrate the remainder of our Lord's address to Peter, it will be necessary to recur to the apostolic decree delivered at Jerusalem in the year 48 or 49. The apostles were invested with authority not only to teach the doctrines of Christianity, but to declare the Jewish dispensation to be at an end. It sometimes happened, however, that they were obliged to concede some things to their Jewish converts for the sake of conscience, and to forbid others, as utterly in-

<sup>1</sup> *Eusebii Pamphil. Ecclesiast. Hist.* lib. ii. cap. xxv. Eusebius appeals, in support of the tradition, to the authority of a certain Caius, who wrote a controversial book in the beginning of the third century, and Caius appeals to the authority of some monuments of the apostles Peter and Paul, which existed on the Via Ostiensis and in the Vatican.

<sup>2</sup> Vide. *Clemen. Alexandrin. Stromatum*, lib. viii. p. 869. Tom. ii. Edit. Oxon. 1715. τοιοῦτος, adds the learned father, ἦν ὁ τῶν μακαρίων γάμος καὶ ἡ μέχρι τῶν φιλτάτων τελεῖται διάθεσις.

compatible with a profession of Christianity : they had to maintain inviolate the moral part of the law, but their aim was to abrogate the ceremonial part, which prefigured the great sacrifice of Christ : some things, therefore they permitted, and some things they forbade ; and whatever they, being under the immediate influence of the Spirit, thought proper to do in this respect, their decision was ratified in heaven—"whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven," &c. The Gospel of St. Matthew having been originally written in Hebrew, was afterwards translated into Greek ; and perhaps this circumstance best accounts for the greater number of Hebrew phrases found in it than in the other Gospels. To bind and to loose was the commonest of all expressions in the Jewish schools, as appears from numberless instances in the Talmudical writings<sup>1</sup>. It was used in doctrines and in judgments by the scribes and lawyers as to things allowed or not allowed in the law : if a thing was permitted, they said we loose it : if it was forbid, the phrase was, we bind it. It is not however spoken with reference to persons, whomsoever ye bind ; but of things, whatsoever ye bind : so that the authority committed to Peter

<sup>1</sup> See *Lightfoot's Talmudical Exercitations on St. Matthew*. Vol. II. p. 205.

and the apostles amounts to this,—whatsoever ye shall think proper, guided by my Spirit, to abolish of the Mosaic ceremonial law, or whatsoever ye shall think it expedient to retain for conscience sake, your acts shall be ratified in heaven. Hence we find them exercising the power of binding, by forbidding those of the circumcision to eat of things offered to idols, &c. and by forbidding to the Gentiles the use of blood for a time, and the power of loosing, by allowing purification to Paul and Barnabas for avoiding scandal. “The apostles and elders, with the whole Church,” at Jerusalem, were now consulted respecting a question which had disturbed the peace of the Gentile converts at Antioch; it was this: whether, in order to salvation, they must necessarily be circumcised, and observe the law of Moses, as the believing Jew did, or whether they were to be freed from these obligations? Now the believing Jews adopted the rite as a national obligation, and not as a means of salvation, which was insinuated in this question of the Gentiles. We now, therefore, find the apostles formally deciding upon this point, which was the first public exercise of those powers committed to them by Christ. Their decision is, no doubt, known to you all: the liberty of the Gentile converts was clearly asserted: the rite of circumcision was loosed with regard to them on earth,

and consequently in heaven ; and yet we find, after this, that Paul took and circumcised Timothy, “because of the Jews which were in those quarters,” and can we doubt that this act was bound in heaven ? The assembly at Jerusalem adopted, after much disputing, the sentence of James, who, from various intimations, seems evidently to have been first in authority among them. It was agreed that the Gentile converts should come out of the Pagan world, by publicly showing their abhorrence of the pollution of idols, and of those scenes of immorality which the Heathen considered not as sin : subjects these, which Paul in many places of his epistles presses upon his Gentile converts ; and inasmuch as the eating of blood and things strangled was the strongest prohibition in the Levitical law, the holy apostles thought proper, in consideration of the Jewish believer, whose conscience would have been offended, to bind upon the Gentiles the abstaining from these things, as necessary for the present : the reason alleged was, that in every city where the books of Moses were read in the synagogues, this prohibition (the strongest in the ceremonial law) would continually strike the ears of the Jews, to the prejudice of the Gentile Christians. St. Paul, who was present at this council, did not think it necessary to press the two latter points upon the Corinthians when he

wrote to them ten years afterwards, whereas he strongly urges the two former. “Meat,” saith he, “commendeth us not to God ; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse ;” and touching things offered unto idols and meats in general, he reduces the prohibition to a matter of conscience, as the apostles originally intended it should be, excepting as to the first binding ; it was loosed by the same authority which bound it—that is, by Divine inspiration. The result of the apostolic decision gave great joy to the Gentile converts, but it did not effectually stop “the leaven of the Pharisees,” which was now already infused into the Christian faith.

We have thus endeavoured to illustrate the words of Christ by applying them to the acts to which they referred ; and in so doing we have reviewed the Christian Church from the period when the first persecution ended, to the council held at Jerusalem—that is to say, from the year 39 to 49 : in this interval we have considered the opening of the kingdom of heaven to the Gentiles, as in our former lecture we treated of the same event with regard to the Jews, and we are now prepared to recount, without interruption, the apostolic labours among the Heathen nations, especially those of St. Paul.

It must now be evident to all who hear me, on what foundation the Church of Christ is

built, “ and other foundation,” saith Paul, “ can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” It must further be manifest what the meaning is of being built upon that foundation, or in the words of St. Peter, to be “ as lively stones built up a spiritual house :” it is to believe with the heart and confess “ with the mouth,” that Christ is the Son of the living God, and that through His name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins. As there can be no misunderstanding in these fundamental doctrines of Christianity, it is clear that whatever tends to subvert them is by us to be avoided ; for, saith the great apostle, “ let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.” The first and chief thing to be ascertained is, whether we have entered into the fold of Christ by the door of faith, which His word alone can open ? Have we taken that word, yea, that very word which openeth as a key to the entrance into Christ’s kingdom ? for recollect, my brethren, the awful effects which have resulted in many parts of the world, and in different ages, whenever and wherever the key of knowledge has been taken away : and it is taken away when men begin to neglect the oracles of truth, and when they hate to be reformed. Therefore it is enough to induce us to appreciate the word of God, which we possess, if we simply regard those places and kingdoms of the earth



which have it not, and if we remember the woe denounced by Christ upon the doctors of the Jewish Church, for taking away the key of knowledge (that is to say, the Scriptures, from the people,) which hangs over the head of every teacher who takes away the oracles of God from the famished souls of men. The judgment indeed may be slow in preparation, for God is long-suffering ! yet the time will surely come, when the cloud of vengeance shall burst over all those who destroy men's souls for lack of knowledge. But this shall not be so with us, brethren, if we guard well the sacred trust of the Divine oracles committed unto us : it is through these, and by the light of these, that I this day preach, and you perceive the solid foundation on which the Church of Christ is built. But whilst we thus speak and “boast ourselves a little,” it is well to take heed that we come not short of our inestimable privileges ; but that we show there is much advantage to us every way, but chiefly because unto us are committed these oracles of God : and when we have entered into and become real children of the kingdom, we shall not fail to build up (every one according to his ability) the Church and the walls of our Zion : we shall feel a delight to pray for her prosperity, and to love all those who wish her well, whilst we pity but condemn not those who would do her evil.

For the days are coming when all those barriers which have hitherto separated men and nations shall be swept away, and all shall have an opportunity of knowing the Lord, from the least unto the greatest ; and then, as when Philip preached Christ in Samaria, and there was great joy in that city, so shall this Gospel be preached and cause great joy in all those solitary places where the name of Jesus has not yet been exalted ; until finally the heathen shall be given up to the Messiah for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

## LECTURE III.

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ON THE LABOURS OF PAUL AND BARNABAS, OR  
THE FIRST SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY AMONG  
THE HEATHEN NATIONS.

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ACTS xi. 26.

*And the Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*

It is a study not unworthy of the faculties with which we are endowed, nor at variance with the religion we profess, to investigate and admire the secondary causes by which the events of Providence and grace, whether on a larger or smaller scale, are accomplished. This, when properly directed, becomes what may be called the philosophy of Christianity; but the true Christian is bound to acknowledge the hand of God in and through every circumstance which affects or changes the moral condition of mankind, or operates upon his own heart and conscience. The natural tendency of the mind is to

dwell upon the secondary causes and forget the first great Cause, or, if in the course of the inquiry the Almighty Governor of the world be recognised, it is too often for the mere purpose of calling in His aid, to “untie a knot,” or to unravel a mystery, for which the powers of the human mind, when exerted to the utmost, are wholly insufficient. In the first propagation of the Gospel, it seems as if the Lord Jesus had provided that these secondary causes should be put completely out of sight. His own appearance was that of an humble servant, the men whom He selected for His companions and ministers, were without education, and absolutely ignorant of letters and philosophy; and thus it appears that the two grand human means for effecting any change in the institutions of men, were entirely wanting: I mean physical power, and superior attainments in knowledge and civilization; it was therefore the immediate work of God. But there was one exception to this position, which, although an exception to the premises, will not affect our conclusion; for if Saul of Tarsus was endowed with learning and other advantages, that same Saul once destroyed the faith he afterwards preached; and if he overcame the Greek philosopher and the Jewish doctor, by the force of his arguments and learning, we are to recollect that he was himself first overcome by the force of the Gospel reve-

lation; if Paul were strong, much stronger was that which subdued his prejudices and attainments, until he, with all his learning and abilities, determined to know nothing amongst his converts save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. “In the infancy of the Christian Church,” observes a learned writer<sup>1</sup>, “it seemed necessary there should be some one who might be able to combat the Jewish doctors and the Pagan philosophers with their own arms; and for this purpose Jesus himself, by an extraordinary voice from Heaven, called a thirteenth apostle to his service, whose attainments, both in Jewish and Grecian learning, were very considerable.” The apostle, speaking of this the most important circumstance of his life, humbly and modestly says, “last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time, for I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the Church of God; but by the grace of God I am what I am.” It is, my brethren, to the labours of this extraordinary man chiefly that I have now to invite your attention. In reading his history, as it is related in the Scriptures, you will see a man of the greatest natural endowments, independent of the preternatural gifts which God bestowed upon him; you will see

<sup>1</sup> *Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History*, part i. chap. iv. sect. 4.

the invincible courage he displayed on all suitable occasions, the unwearied patience with which he bore all kinds of privation and suffering in promoting his beloved object; you will often see him employing human means, and making use of those temporal advantages he possessed, and even sometimes pleading his civil rights and privileges as a Roman citizen; but, through all these things, you will perceive that the faith he preached stood not in any of those external things “not in the wisdom of man but in the power of God.”

Cilicia is a district of Asia Minor, situated along the coast of the Mediterranean sea, opposite the Island of Cyprus, and is bounded towards the north by the long chain of Mount Taurus, stretching towards the river Euphrates: it was conquered and reduced to the form of a Roman province by Pompey: and it fell to the lot of Cicero to preside over it as pro-consul. The seat of government was Tarsus, a city celebrated for the learned men it produced, and was at one time the rival of Alexandria and Athens in literature and the study of the fine arts<sup>1</sup>. These advantages allured many Roman citizens to take

<sup>1</sup> Vide. *Strabo*, lib. xiv. p. 673. Tom. II. The famous impostor, Apollonius Thyrsus, was also educated at Tarsus: he was sent thither from Cappadocia at the age of fourteen, and may have been cotemporary in that city with Saul. *Philostrat. vit. Apollon.* lib. i. cap. 3.

up their residence in it, amongst whom were several of Jewish extraction. In this city, when it was at the height of its fame, was born the great apostle of the Gentiles, according to his own account : “ I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city.” He was of the tribe of Benjamin, and his Hebrew name was Saul ; but being born to the privilege of a Roman citizen, he had also a Roman name, Paul, which he assumed and always used after he had converted Sergius Paulus in the Island of Cyprus. During the early part of his life, he applied himself to the study of Greek literature, in which he appears to have made great proficiency, as we may see from various quotations and allusions in his epistles, and especially from his preaching at Athens<sup>1</sup>. He was afterwards sent to Jerusalem for the purpose of receiving his religious instruction, which was effected under the direction of the most celebrated doctor of that age, Gamaliel : and amongst the various sects then existing at Jeru-

<sup>1</sup> His quotation from one of the Greek poets *τοῦ γὰρ καὶ γέ-  
ρος ἐσμὲν* is supposed by Clemens Alexandrinus to be taken from Aratus, who was from Paul’s native country of Cilicia ; but others think the apostle referred to these words in the hymn of Cleanthes, v. 5. *ἐκ σοῦ γὰρ γέρος ἐσμὲν*. See Dr. Gray’s *Connexion between Sacred and Profane Literature* ; and Rosenmüller *Scholia in Acta Apostol.* in locis.

salem he chose that of the Pharisees. He first appears in the sacred narrative as a leader in the persecution raised against the Christians; and when the blood of St. Stephen was shed, he kept the clothes of those who stoned him, and he is then called a young man. Distinguished by his youthful zeal for the institutions of his country, and for the religion of the Pharisees, he appeared to the chief priests a proper person to entrust with the execution of their decrees against the new sect, and they therefore readily complied with his request in granting him a commission to Damascus. Armed with this authority, he set out with the intention of seizing by force as many of the followers of Christ as he could find, and of bringing them as prisoners in chains to Jerusalem. But his own account of the matter is more affecting, “many of the saints [in Jerusalem] did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them, and I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.” It pleased the Lord, who had reserved from the beginning a different work for Saul, to stop him in his mad career, whilst on his way to the capital of Cœlo Syria. The account of his miraculous conversion



is found in the ninth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles ; and this, as I have already said, took place in the thirty-fifth year of the Christian æra, that is, nearly two years after our Lord's ascension, being the last year but one of the reign of Tiberius. From this time we have Saul in the character of a follower of Christ, and his career in that honourable capacity may be traced through nearly thirty years. This period may be divided into two portions, taking the apostolic council at Jerusalem as the point of division, which took place, if I mistake not Saint Paul's own words, "fourteen years after" his conversion, and consequently, in the year 49. We shall, therefore, in the first place, bring up our account of him to that important date<sup>1</sup> in the apostolic age, and then we shall be ready to proceed with the whole of the sacred narrative.

I need not repeat to you how the apostle, after his sudden conversion, was instructed to proceed

<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt that the fourteen years mentioned in Gal. i. 1. ought to be reckoned from the period of St. Paul's conversion, and not from the time he "came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia," that is, when the first persecution ceased, in 39. (Comp. Act. ix. 30, 31. Gal. i. 17—23.), for that would place the apostolic council in the year 53, which is too late. Without adhering servilely to any particular system of chronology, I have endeavoured to fix the leading dates of the sacred narrative from a general comparison of events, with the best authorities in these critical matters.

to Damascus, nor how he was visited by Ananias, who baptized him into the faith of Christ ; but it may be profitable to reflect for a moment upon the wonderful power of Divine grace upon the human heart. What a change ! If the narrative be true, the fact is evidently Divine : and that the narrative is true, requires no greater exercise of faith, than we are daily applying to ordinary matters of history. The city of Damascus might have witnessed the presence of a furious though conscientious persecutor of the flock of Christ ; men and women might have been haled to prison and to death for the simple profession of a pure and modest religion ; but instead of this, we witness the demeanour of an humbled and repenting sinner, who had seen the light from Heaven above the brightness of the sun, and his deadly hatred for the unoffending followers of Jesus, turned into love. Now all is changed, and the new convert is eager to bear his testimony to the faith which he would have yesterday destroyed. Previously to this conversion, he was learned, and according to the strictest sect of the Jews, lived in the observance of his outwardly religious duties ; but what was all this without the “ faith which worketh by love : ” without the inward light which puts a new aspect upon every feeling and every transaction of life ? Thus, brethren, it will ever be—although our con-

version and the degree of our light may be very different from that of Paul, still unless we apprehend the blessed Redeemer of our souls by a true and living faith, until we exclaim, from a deep sense of our unworthiness, in some such sort, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" we may not, indeed, hale men and women to prison, because the improved condition of society hath happily rendered such fury vain; but we shall be enemies in our hearts to the truth as it is in Jesus, and we shall verily think to do God service by opposing ourselves to what is really the doctrine of Christ. Let the conversion of St. Paul then stand as an admonition to all those who "speak evil of the things they know not," and who talk and act, without having seriously examined either what they oppose, or what they would substitute in place of the rock of offence. But to proceed with our narrative. The ministry of St. Paul was not received, like his former commission to persecute the saints, from human authority; but by an immediate revelation from heaven: anxious to impress this fact upon the wavering Christians of Galatia, he tells them that he had no conference with flesh and blood immediately after his conversion: he did not so much as go up to Jerusalem, where he knew all the apostles who had lived with Christ were at that time residing: he asked no opinions of men:

he consulted no one's views ; but he immediately betook himself into an appropriate solitude, there to be instant and earnest in prayer, that he might be confirmed and strengthened in the knowledge of the truth. The place he chose for this purpose was somewhere in Arabia Petrea, not improbably in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai, where God had once before condescended to speak with a man face to face, as with a friend. Some suppose it was during this retirement that the apostle had his extraordinary visions, and being caught up into Paradise, heard those unspeakable words which it was not lawful for him to utter. This, however, is not possible ; for he himself fixes the period of those visions at fourteen years before he wrote his second Epistle to the Corinthians, that is to say, not earlier than the year 45. After this journey, undertaken for the purpose of communing with his own heart and listening to the Divine suggestions, he returned to Damascus ; there he entered into the synagogues, and to the astonishment of the Jews, preached the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, and confounded them out of those very scriptures they professed to receive as from God. The Jews of Damascus not being able to resist his arguments, formed a conspiracy against him, and watched the gates of the city by which they expected him to go out, both night and day, to kill him ; they even engaged in their

enterprize the governor of the city, appointed under king Aretas, and he put his whole garrison in requisition to seek and to apprehend Paul : it was only by the expedient of letting him down at night in a basket by the city walls that he was enabled to effect his escape. This event took place three years after his conversion ; and then, for the first time, in the character of a Christian, he appeared at Jerusalem. The brethren, in the first instance, were incredulous as to the fact of his conversion : they could not believe that he who had so wasted the Church of Christ, had now become a disciple ; but being introduced by Barnabas, who gave his testimony not only to the fact, but also to the boldness with which he had preached Christ at Damascus, they received him amongst them, and it is said “ he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem.” His whole continuance on this occasion did not exceed fifteen days, and during that time he only became personally acquainted with Peter and James. He took several opportunities of disputing against the Hellenistic Jews, and the subject of the debate was his favourite theme—“ the name of the Lord Jesus.” The same offensive doctrine produced a second conspiracy against his life ; and the brethren, having knowledge of it, conducted the apostle to Cæsarea, and from thence he went away to his native city Tarsus. It seems most probable that

he effected this journey by land, for he intimates that he visited at this time the churches of Judea, which were in Christ, to whom he was not personally known ; only they had heard that he which once persecuted them, now preached the faith in which they stood. He farther informs us that he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia ; that is, in prosecuting his journey homewards he passed through Syria, and thus arrived at Tarsus. At this period the churches are said to have had rest through all Judea and Galilee and Samaria ; that is, during the time Paul was on his journey to Tarsus, the persecution (begun about the matter of Stephen) ended. This event took place in the last year but one of the reign of the emperor Caligula, which answers nearly to the year 39. Paul had now been four years called to be an apostle.

What has just been related has reference to the thirtieth verse of the ninth chapter of the Acts, where it is said, “the brethren brought Paul down to Cæsarea and sent him forth to Tarsus.” In the eleventh chapter and the twenty-fifth verse, we find that Barnabas departed from Antioch “to Tarsus, for to seek Saul ;” from which we infer that he had remained in his native country ever since his arrival from Cæsarea : this comprised a space of about two years ; whence it will appear that before the apostle entered upon

his public ministry, he spent nearly seven years in suitable preparation. He was not indeed inactive in his Master's service during that period, for he was pressed with zeal to convince the Jews ; but it is sufficiently intimated, that the preaching of the Gospel is not to be taken in hand unadvisedly, nor by any sudden calls or imaginary inspirations ; for although Paul was called by a miraculous conversion, and told of the mission reserved for him, he does not appear in the Church as a teacher and apostle until many years of preparatory exercise, much of which time was evidently spent in the study of the Scriptures. Barnabas conducted the apostle to Antioch, and there they assembled themselves with the Church, and taught much people for the space of a whole year. The disciples were now for the first time (without any farther distinction of Jew and Gentile) called Christians.

This honourable name, which has been long effaced in those regions where it originated, has descended as an inheritance upon the nations of the west ; but it may be very doubtful whether the apostles would have allowed the name to many who now claim it, or rather who use it as a political expedient for the maintenance of despotic rule, or to subserve the schemes of private interest. It is, however, my brethren, a name we all bear, and we should feel some resentment

against any one who presumed to deny it to us. I would fain hope that such resentment would be honest ; but had we been at Antioch in those days, and seen what it really was that constituted a Christian, perhaps some amongst us would ingenuously confess that the distinction hardly belonged to us. To be a Christian at Antioch was to have put away the pride of human nature before God, was to have renounced all dependence upon the righteousness of the law, and to have received Christ in simplicity as the only means of salvation : it was to live a life of purity, and to be employed in doing good unto all men, especially those of the household of faith. The history of the formation of the Church at Antioch is short but forcible : when some of the dispersed believers were come thither, they spake unto Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus, and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned unto the Lord. And when Barnabas arrived, and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord. This is the whole account, my brethren. These were the men who were first called Christians ; they believed in the Lord Jesus through the grace of God ; they turned unto the Lord, and with purpose of heart they clave unto Him. This, then, is to be a Christian in the



primitive sense. They surely were not troubled with ceremonies, or Church authority, or wonders, or saints, or images, or clouds of incense, or long processions, or hosts of angels and departed spirits ; the first Christians believed in the Lord Jesus, turned unto the Lord, and clave to Him with full purpose of heart. If, therefore, we have these characteristics, shall we not be owned as Christians by Him who knoweth the heart ? And oh that we had them really, and could say, with unfeigned lips, we are turned to the Lord ! According to the traditional accounts of ecclesiastical writers, the apostles, after this general title of Christians was adopted, went into different parts of the world to make known the Gospel. Although this agrees well with the extensive commission given them by our Lord, when he commanded them to “go and teach all nations,” we must receive the detailed and marvellous accounts of uninspired writers with great caution. That Peter, after he had been miraculously delivered from prison, and had gone (as it is written) “to another place,” came to Rome to oppose the wicked heresies of Simon Magus, is no longer seriously maintained by any man of competent learning and judgment<sup>1</sup> ; it is indeed

<sup>1</sup> The use which Justin Martyr makes of the inscription discovered in the Island of the Tyber (see *Burgess's Topography and Antiquities of Rome*, Vol. II. p. 241, note 76,) shows how

evident, from what we have already said, that the scene of his labours, until the year 54, was chiefly confined to Judea and Samaria, with Antioch, unless he went for a time into those districts of the lesser Asia mentioned in his epistle<sup>1</sup>. Although the Church at Ephesus was established by St. Paul, there can be little doubt that St. John ultimately took the direction of it, and passed the remainder of his life in that part of Asia: he also exercised a pastoral charge over those other churches mentioned in the Apocalypse, as may be inferred from the messages to each, with which the Spirit charged him. Saint Andrew is said to have gone towards Scythia, and from thence to have passed into Greece and Epirus. Saint Philip, according to the same tradition, laboured in upper Asia, and died at

cautious we should be in reading ecclesiastical history, even where there is no intention to deceive. Several writers, concerned for the dignity of the papal chair, have contended that when St. Peter escaped from Herod's persecution, "and went into another place," *Acts* xii. 17. he came to Rome and established the Holy See! As this would take place in the year 41, there is just room for the famous 25 years; but this theory is now exploded, by permission, even at Rome. In the last edition of *Nibbi's Vasi*, prefaced by a chronological table of the sovereign Pontiffs, we read—S. Pietro di Bethsaide in Galilea *stabilisce* la sede in Roma, *anno* 54. This date is possible, if the *fact* be admitted.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Lecture II. p. 162.

Hierapolis in Phrygia ; there is mention of several daughters he had, holy virgins, some of whom survived their father. St. Thomas chose Parthia, and is even supposed to have gone as far as India. St. Bartholomew preached in Armenia, and about the Euphrates, having in his possession the Gospel of Saint Matthew, which evangelist is supposed to have preached in Ethiopia, and to have written his gospel first for the use of the Jews in Palestine, in the language then in use among them. The other apostles, Saint Simon, St. Jude, or Thaddeus, and St. Matthias, have also their respective districts assigned to them about Persia and Arabia. It is not my intention to examine into the authenticity of these accounts<sup>1</sup>, because they would lead me beyond the limits of the inspired history ; but we ought to believe that the apostles did as they were commanded, and went and taught all nations ; nor can the vestiges of Christianity which have been found in remote parts of the east<sup>2</sup> be easily accounted for in any other manner.

<sup>1</sup> The reader may consult *Fleury Histoire Ecclésiastique*, Liv. prem. page 24, Tom. I, where he will find the references to the original writers.

<sup>2</sup> The communication opened by Hippalus, between Berenice, on the Arabian Gulf, and Musiris, a harbour on the east coast of India (see *Robertson's Disquisition on Ancient India*, sect. ii.), may account for the early introduction of Christianity on the (now) Malabar coast. Eusebius relates, that towards the end

It having been announced by a prophet, named Agabus, who came from Jerusalem, that there should be a great famine in every part of the country, the disciples, in that spirit of Christian love which characterised the primitive churches, determined to send relief, every man according to his means, to the poor Christians in Judea. Barnabas and Saul were charged with the contributions; and it does not appear they did more on that occasion than simply execute their commission, for the next time they are mentioned, it is in these terms, “Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their ministry, or charge;” “and” it is added, “they took with them John, whose surname was Mark.” It is evident, from the whole tenour of this narrative, as well as from what is to follow, that Antioch was considered the mother church of the Gentiles, as Jerusalem was that of the Jews; it was, as it

of the second century, a learned philosopher, named Patænus, went to India to preach the Gospel, and it is said he found Christians there in possession of the Gospel of St. Matthew—the tradition was that St. Bartholomew had first planted Christianity in those countries. It is not indeed said by the ecclesiastical historian to what part of India Patænus came, but as he was from Alexandria, the ancient and only course of navigation then immediately suggests to us the Malabar coast. Vide *Euseb. Ecclesiast. Hist.* lib. v. cap. 10, but see *Buchanan’s Christian Researches*, pp. 128—234.

were, the centre of the apostles' labours : from it they were sent out, and to it they returned, bringing an account of their success. The time had now come when the energies of St. Paul were to be more fully called forth, and he was separated from the Church of Antioch, together with Barnabas, for the great work whereunto God had called him, which is said to have been done at the special suggestion of the Holy Ghost. Now you will observe, that although called to the ministry by the express command of God, the two missionaries were both of them ordained to their new office, by the laying on of hands : previously to this, I conceive Paul and Barnabas to have been merely teachers and exhorters, or (speaking in ecclesiastical terms) deacons<sup>1</sup> ; the circumstance of their being employed in carrying the alms to Jerusalem is a proof of this, for the proper office of a deacon was to administer to the wants of the poor. In the third verse of the

<sup>1</sup> The five persons, out of which Paul and Barnabas were selected at Antioch, are all introduced, without distinction, as "certain prophets and teachers." (Acts xiii. 1.) It does not appear that Paul had yet been recognised in the Church in his *apostolical* character : he, no doubt, knew his high calling (1 Cor. xv. 8. Gal. 1. 15. 16.), but he submitted to the ceremony of ordination, by the laying on of hands, as Christ submitted to the rite of baptism, though he needed it not. (Matt. iii. 15.) Compare with those five teachers of Antioch, the ministry of Stephen. (Acts vi. 9, 10, and viii. 5. 35.)

thirteenth chapter, you will find it said, “when they (the elders and the assembly) had fasted and prayed, they laid their hands on Barnabas and Paul, and sent them away.” This I conceive to have been their ordination to the priesthood<sup>1</sup>. They were now enabled not only to teach, but also duly to administer the sacraments, and perform every other rite which a church might require for its regulation and discipline. The two missionaries now went forth to preach the kingdom of God, and they are particularly said to have been sent forth by the Holy Ghost : whenever this is the case, the word of Christ will always prosper ; and whosoever goes forth in any other strength, or with any other commission, will make no converts to the faith of Christ. The country to which the preachers directed their attention was Asia Minor. Paul seems to have had more than an ordinary concern for the souls of those who lived in his native country. After planting Christianity in the district of Seleucia, and sailing to Cyprus, they preached in the capital of that island, which was Salamis, with what success it is not related ; but when they arrived at the city of Paphos, situated at the extremity of the

<sup>1</sup> “ A Presbyter, according to the proper meaning of the New Testament, is he unto whom our Saviour Christ hath communicated the power of spiritual procreation” (*Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity*, Book v. sec. 78.)

island, they succeeded in converting the Roman deputy-governor of the district, Sergius Paulus. They then left the island, and arrived on the coast of Pamphylia, and came to Perga; and here John, (surnamed Mark,) who had continued with them during all their travels from Antioch, returned to Jerusalem. It is evident he had not sufficient courage for such a dangerous undertaking; and on this account Paul refused to take him with him a second time, which was the cause of a dissension between him and Barnabas. In the country of Pisidia, bordering upon Pamphylia, was another city of the name of Antioch; here the preachers went into the Jewish synagogue, and Paul made that discourse which is preserved to us in the thirteenth chapter of the Acts. Considering the contradiction and blaspheming of the Jews, we are led to admire the boldness and faithful sincerity of Paul and Barnabas, the result of which was, that the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region. With good reason St. Paul once said, that in every city bonds and afflictions awaited him: he had sufficient experience that the natural heart was enmity against God, and that to preach salvation through a crucified Saviour, and to condemn the self-righteousness of men, by stripping them of their fancied merits, was a sure way to raise up persecutors against

him. But the importance of preaching the truth was greater to him than the evasion of any personal insults. He did not resist unto death, neither did he show himself careless to the rage of his enemies ; for we find at this city of Antioch, when the Jews raised a persecution, and expelled the Christian teachers out of their coasts, they went away without resistance ; observing only the command of their Master, as a testimony that the kingdom of God had come upon these Jews, “ they shook off the dust of their feet against them.”

From thence they advanced into the central parts of Asia Minor, and took up their abode in Iconium. This town, together with Derbe, Lystra, and Cæsarea Magna, were the principal places in that province of Asia, called Lycaonia : the labours of Paul and Barnabas were now confined to this district. At Lystra, the infatuated multitude believed the two missionaries to be gods descended from Olympus, in the likeness of mortals ; but very soon they turned upon them, and stoned Paul, who, with his fellow-labourer also, planted the Christian faith at Derbe, and had even the courage to return by all those cities where they had preached, and from which they had been expelled. It is said, moreover, they ordained them elders in every church, and prayed with fasting ; and they com-



mended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. Here, then, we observe such order prevailing among those primitive Christians, that none presumed to be elders, except those who were properly ordained ; but, being so ordained, they were exhorted to continue in the faith of Christ, and were left to govern their respective churches. The fellow-labourers having returned towards the sea-coast, by the districts of Pisidia and Pamphylia, now sailed from Attalia, and returned to the mother Church at Antioch, “ from whence,” it is written, “ they had been recommended to the grace of God, for the work which they fulfilled.” The Church at Antioch was now gathered together to hear the interesting accounts of Paul and Barnabas, who rehearsed in public all, not that *they* had done, but “ that God had done by them,” as instruments ; and how with them, as keys, he had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles.

How much the joy of those Christians was increased, none can imagine but those who really feel an interest in the eternal welfare of their fellow-creatures : such will understand that a great delight is inwardly experienced, whenever it is ascertained that a sinner is converted from the error of his way ; and even to the mansions above does the soul of that man ascend, to mingle with

the joy which is there diffused among the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth.

Paul and Barnabas now “ abode long time with the disciples.” We suppose their travels in Asia to have occupied about a year. St. Paul tells the Galatians, that he came up to Jerusalem fourteen years after his conversion. He returned from this journey into Asia, about the year 45 : this, therefore, will leave for the expression of St. Luke (“ long time,”) a space of three or four years ; during which period, they would continually receive accounts at Antioch, from the churches in Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia ; but none of these have come down to us. It is further said, after the decision of the apostolic council, that Paul and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord with many others also ; whence it is evident, that they had not left Antioch, except to go up to Jerusalem to the apostolic synod, and to relate what God had done by them in the heathen world. After this St. Paul made a proposition to Barnabas to go again and visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the Gospel ; but since they could not agree about the companions to be taken with them, “ they departed asunder, one from the other ;” Barnabas, with Mark, to the island of

Cyprus ; Paul, with Silas, to Syria and Cilicia ; and he went through those countries and confirmed the Churches in the faith they had received. Having now brought the apostles' labours beyond the epoch of the council of Jerusalem—that is to say, to about the year 50, we will leave the narrative for this time, and proceed to apply what has been said to our spiritual improvement.

It may be assumed by the minister of the Gospel that the spiritual condition of man is by nature, in all ages, and in all places, almost the same. Benevolent institutions, national privileges, and the benefits arising out of what is termed civilization, may doubtless make a great difference in the moral condition of society ; but considering human nature in its general state of enmity towards God, and its reluctance to receive the truth as it is in Jesus, it will be found to vary little until converted and purified by the operation of God's Holy Spirit. Of the word of truth, however, it may be confidently affirmed that it is sure and stedfast ; and whatever change the knowledge of it may effect in the minds of men, still, like its Divine Author, it is “yesterday, to-day, and for ever the same.” “The grass withereth and the flower fadeth, but the word of our God abideth for ever.” Now if any be disposed, in taking a view of the first spread of Christianity, to assume that there was so much

difference between the circumstances of the world at that period and those of the present, that the ministers of the Gospel have not now the same enemies to contend with, that the same doctrine cannot now be applied with equal effect, nor the same powers be available in its application, it is at least incumbent upon them to show upon what ground they would establish their position. The difference must consist in one of three things : first, the materials upon which the apostles had to work ; secondly, the things they taught, or the means by which they worked ; or thirdly, the agency by which the operation was effected. But, my brethren, with regard to the first, were not the materials human nature ? Was not the same carnal mind opposed to them with which we are born as children of the fallen Adam ? Are we naturally more disposed than they were to embrace, with the whole heart, the doctrine of a crucified Saviour ? or have we less need of reconciliation with our offended God, because our civil condition is improved ? There is neither Greek nor barbarian, bond nor free, in this respect : enmity to the Gospel in the heart still unhappily prevails in the highest stage of civilization and refinement ; wherefore it is not in this respect that the difference can consist. Secondly, with respect to the things taught, or the means by which they worked, can any other doctrine be so

forcibly applied? Is there any other doctrine so completely adapted to our wants or our capacities, as that taught by the apostles? Are our appeals to the human heart at any time more powerful than when we adhere to the very words which they have left on record for our use and instruction? Surely then no one can reasonably object that what we preach, though it be none other Gospel, is without effect where we abide by the written word. And thirdly, as to the agency by which the operation was effected: if it be alleged that our exhortations are comparatively feeble, and that we want the gifts with which the first preachers were endowed—admitting the superiority of their powers—should we not recollect that even Paul “came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom?” It was then, as it must be now, the matter and not the manner—“Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” The word we preach produces the effect of conversion and sanctification only by the operation of the Holy Spirit: neither can the manner in which His Divine influence acts upon the spiritual nature of man, be changed, however it may differ in degree, any more than the nature of God can change: for the same God which caused the light to shine out of darkness, hath also caused the spiritual light to shine in the human heart: and surely, He ruleth

the spirits of all flesh as constantly as he ruleth the whole of nature's elements.

So that, brethren, in every point of view, we are but as the inhabitants of Cilicia, Pamphylia, and Cyprus ; their condition may be safely taken as a warning, or as an encouragement to ourselves : we have seen that some received with thankfulness and great joy the message of the apostles, whilst others put away from them the word of life, and even sought to destroy the preachers of it. And yet all heard that word ; its doctrine was as the light of heaven, freely extended unto all, as it is this day to every hearer. The doctrine of salvation by Christ is proclaimed : men are told that " except they repent they shall perish : " that " being by nature children of wrath, even as others, " there is now no alternative but to " flee from the wrath to come : " they are told that this cannot be effected by means of obedience, such as they can render in outward act, because God can accept nothing but a perfect obedience, which none but Christ hath accomplished : that in consequence of this, they must " submit to the righteousness of God, " and lay aside that pride which ill brooks an unconditional offer of grace. What then ? The apostles said none other things than these ; but what is the result of this preaching of the Gospel, which

soundeth from day to day in our ears ? “ Some believe the things that are spoken, and some believe them not,” and it is certain that those who do believe them are favoured with the manifestation of God's grace and peace, for “ the secret of the Lord is with them that fear him,” whilst those who refuse the Gospel are as surely said to bring upon themselves an increase of condemnation. Here then are two things established,—the sovereignty of Divine Grace, and the responsibility of man. The former is that election by grace to eternal life, of which the sacred penmen so often speak—this cometh of God ; the other is that condemnation which sin and unbelief produce, and this cometh of the fallen man. If you ask me to reconcile these two things, you require more than is within the power of the human mind to compass ; and although it might be urged that an incomprehensible position can never be received into the mind, still we maintain, that these two doctrines, taken in their respective applications, must ever produce a wonderful effect upon the heart of man. Upon the sinner, his own responsibility weighs heavily, nor can any thing ever shake it off : upon the penitent believer, the sovereignty of grace acts as a source of confidence and joy, nor can it ever abandon that soul which humbly relies upon it for strength to do the will of God. Suppose

then, for a moment, that Paul and Barnabas were proposing to us the very words they preached for the people's acceptance at Antioch of Pisidia :  
“ Be it known unto you, that through this man is preached unto you forgiveness of sin, and by Him all that believe are justified from all things : ”  
in what number should we class ourselves, brethren? Amongst those who believed? Or what should we think of the doctrine announced? That it is true? Say ye this? Then, as all that believe are justified from all things, ye are justified : then are your sins forgiven, and ye are free to serve the living God. Here the spiritual condition of the believer is positively set forth : it is neither enthusiasm nor methodism, nor any other of those names by which it is often called, but it is Christianity. What ! shall we be in a worse condition, or less confident than were the first poor Christians of Asia?—shall we have “ the witness in ourselves ” less perfect, because we have been admitted into the faith of Christ by early baptism?—shall we stand upon the orthodoxy of a baptismal regeneration, seeking for the foundations of a ruin, amidst the deplorable wreck of faith and a good conscience? Vain strife of words ! Then, if this be not our condition, if we cannot appeal to a conscience void of offence, if we be indifferent or insensible to the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins, if we be



not of those who believe with the heart, and consequently be not justified in the sight of God, I know of no alternative, brethren,—we are in condemnation : prove we ourselves then ; for it is fit that we should have some knowledge of ourselves. Either Christ was received into the heart, or He was not received, wherever Paul and Barnabas preached ! These are important inquiries, when pressed close upon the consciences of men : it is in this way, or I am mistaken, that the truth of God is designed to search the heart, and probe the sincerity of our professions. I think these were the doctrines which caused the kingdom of Satan to fall like lightning in the east, and which are destined ultimately to govern the world ; for they belong to all ages, and are applicable both to a rude and civilized state of human society. It is for us, therefore, brethren, to try whether the Gospel has been planted in our hearts, as well as in our island ; let this be the Asia over which our reflections travel ; let this be the map which we spread before our consciences : if we feel it has not been planted there, it is for us to be alarmed at our responsibility ; if we feel it has, it is for us to magnify the grace of God, and not to live as if we had received His grace in vain ; then may we look to the other words of the apostles, which they spake to the faithful on their return

to Lystra, and Iconium, and Antioch, “ confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God ;” then it will be time, and not till then, to apply and claim the promises which are in Christ Jesus, “ My grace is sufficient for thee ;” “ my strength shall be perfected in thy weakness ;” “ sin shall not have dominion over you,” and the like.

The first journey of the apostle into Asia, exhibits the effects of Divine grace upon the hearts of those who had never before received or heard the Gospel. Although there is evidently a difference in our own case, to whom at least it hath been preached, yea, and who have been baptized into the faith of it, yet if we be not real Christians, like those of Antioch, but reject the word of life, and put it away from our serious consideration, we are certainly in a worse case than those who refused to hear Paul and Barnabas ; for they were visited once only by the word, but the same word is pressed upon our attention daily, and our opportunities are far greater than theirs. I say, then, (in recurring once more to the doctrines which have been deduced from our subject,) that we equally exhibit, in our respective conditions, the sovereign power of God’s grace and mercy, and the res-

possibility of the sinner. The sinner should consider the apostle in his first passage through the regions of Asia ; and those who rely on the sovereign power of God's grace and mercy, are entitled to the consolatory words of St. Paul on his return. The sinner, or the unbeliever in heart, who is still responsible for all the privileges he possesses, should hear with fear and trembling these words of the missionaries, when at Pisidia : " It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you ; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo ! we turn to the Gentiles." From this declaration of the apostle, all those who, in a similar manner, on the one hand repudiate the Gospel, may plainly perceive that the condemnation rests with them ; they judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life. The very rejection of God's word, the non-receiving it, is condemnation : and then behold it passes away to another region ; the candlestick is moved from its place, until both individuals and nations stumble in darkness and fall deeper into all kinds of misery, because they know not the day of their visitation. On the other hand, the Christian who has embraced the truth, will hear what Paul and Barnabas said to the brethren at Lystra, on their return—" that we must, through much tribulation, enter into the kingdom of God," in which

declaration is evidently set forth a kingdom into which, though trouble intervene, the faithful shall enter ; yea, even into that “ rest which remaineth to the people of God.” The tribulation through which the saints must pass, may indeed vary in its character, according to circumstances ; the Christians of Pisidia would, doubtless, have to endure what none of us can ever be called upon to suffer ; but of this, the sincere Christian may rest assured, that he will have his share of tribulation. I speak not of the bodily affliction, or the events of Providence by which his faith may be put to the trial (though these are often sent upon him for his correction), but I speak rather of the tribulation which ariseth because of his infirmities, when he laments before God the sins and imperfections which a conscience less tender, or a heart not under the influence of the Divine love, neither thinks of nor acknowledges. What earnestness in prayer, what bitterness of repentance, what self reproaches, for so often forsaking the fountain of living waters ! These are the inward tribulations ; but then, my brethren, what joy and peace in believing, what assistance from Divine grace and love, what consolation in all the evils of life, what triumph in the hour of death, what glorious prospects, after all these trials, of being one day received into the number of the blessed ! Let us then be care-

ful that we be not found amongst the unbelievers of Pisidia, who lost even the privilege of hearing God's truth, but let us be found amongst those of Lystra and Iconium, yea, notwithstanding all their tribulations; for be it known unto the child of God, however much he may be afflicted, that those light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work for him "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

## LECTURE IV.

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ON THE LABOURS OF PAUL AND SILAS. PAUL'S  
SECOND JOURNEY INTO ASIA AND THROUGH  
MACEDONIA, GREECE, ETC., UNTIL HIS VISIT  
TO JERUSALEM.—[A.D. 50 TO 60.]

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ACTS xix. 21.

*After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, after I have been there, I must also see Rome.*

WHENEVER we take a comprehensive view of Christianity, in the light of an established institution, it is important to make a distinction between its immediate and remote influence ; for it is evident that many partake of the moral benefits of the Christian religion, who neither acknowledge its Divine origin, nor live under the influence of its doctrines. An individual born to the privileges of a Christian, and nurtured or brought up, I will not say in the fear of

the Lord, but in the principles of that high-toned morality, which the religion of Christ alone sanctions and proclaims, unconsciously derives benefit from a source he never personally arrived at ; and this is what I mean by the remote influence of Christianity. We conceive this to be that blessing of Divine Providence which rests upon a nation or a place, for the sake of those who live under the immediate influence of the doctrine of Christ, and this to such an extent that the whole community may be spared for the sake of the ten righteous men that are found in it. But whenever the period may arrive in which there shall be no more any who are owned by the Lord Jesus as His people, then the whole displeasure of the Almighty may be expected to go forth, and, as in times of old, when He pronounced the fatal sentence, “ they shall not enter into my rest,” His wrath is manifest in the calamities which sometimes fall upon whole nations, and in the warning voice which crieth woe ! woe ! to the inhabitants of the rebellious city, after which is sent the last and most dreadful visitation of all, He even taketh away the light which had cheered its unconscious and ungrateful inhabitants, and letteth out the vineyard to others. In this manner it is that we may account for the deplorable state of those countries in which St. Paul

first planted the Churches of Christ<sup>1</sup>: the moral influence of which I speak has vanished, and men have been left to follow their own imaginations until their latter state has become worse than the first, and they are to every good work reprobate. Now what has happened to whole nations may happen to individuals, which circumstance induces us to turn to the immediate influence of God's truth—that is to say, the spiritual influence as distinct from the moral, in order to show, that if, whilst we hear we obey not the truth, or if, having received it, whether with a degree of willingness or indifference, we hold it in unrighteousness, the individual soul becomes the subject of all the just judgments of heaven: neither hardness of heart nor contempt of God's word and commandments will be slow to succeed the backslidings and departures from the light of truth, until the evil heart is ready to receive the seeds of every spiritual enemy which may arise

<sup>1</sup> The establishment of Islamism upon the ruins of Christianity in the East, is, I think, a striking example of God's judgments upon apostate nations. Not only is the faith of Mahomet, as Professor White observed, wherever it is established, united with despotic power, but it is destructive of all right moral feeling. If the Turks be allowed the virtue of speaking truth, it still leaves their character, like that of the Corsair,

“ Link'd with one virtue and a thousand crimes.”



in the darkness of night to sow tares for its destruction. Clearly as these things may be exemplified in comparing the labours of Paul and Silas with their subsequent results, yet will it be far better to take heed unto ourselves, and consult our own security—a spiritual exercise to which the meditation upon these subjects is intended to lead us.

It will not be forgotten by such of you as have attended to our narrative, that whilst Barnabas took Mark, and sailed away to the island of Cyprus, Paul and Silas travelled into Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches, which had been there planted by Paul himself. This separation of Paul and Barnabas was caused by a dispute which took place on the subject of their former companion Mark. St. Paul considered that he had shown too little zeal for the work of the ministry in leaving them so abruptly in their first journey into Asia: this Barnabas did not think a sufficient reason for refusing to take him with them again. The contention seemed to be a subject of regret, but two great benefits resulted from it: a larger field was opened to their missionary labours, the Gospel was more widely diffused, Mark afterwards became more zealous and faithful, and one of the most useful fellow-labourers with St. Paul in his arduous and diffi-

cult circumstances<sup>1</sup>. It is evident that such events might have been produced without the contention of these two inspired men : their conduct, therefore, is not to be an example for our imitation ; but we may hence learn never to mix our personal differences with the primary object of our ministry, nor ever to betray the sacred cause of our Lord and Master, nor fail to hold the faith in the unity of the Spirit, however we may differ in our opinion of one another's zeal. For, as to the dispute, it was not about the salvation which is only through a crucified Saviour, that these primitive teachers differed ; but it was in their opinion and private judgment of a brother, into which, it being not a matter intended for their judgment, God did not interpose by his Holy Spirit to direct or guide them : it was left for time and circumstances to decide. And thus it will ever be, my brethren : our contentions will be endless, if we inquire what this man or that man shall do ; this is not the truth into which the Spirit is pledged to guide us ; but whenever our views may unfortunately differ in any thing relating to the doctrines of the Bible, as surely as we search the Scriptures for the truth, in all

<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. iii. 11. This Mark must not be confounded with the Evangelist.

humility, so surely will God enlighten us and unite us more to Himself and to one another ; and it is to this end that the promise is made, “ask and ye shall receive.” Let, therefore, that charity be in us, which “believeth all things, hopeth all things ;” let there be no strife among us, nor contention, for we are brethren, and “the Canaanite is still in the land.”—“I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say.”

When Paul had arrived for the second time at Derbe and Lystra, he found the believers stedfast in the faith they had received. And here we have a new character introduced to our notice, who became an ornament and a champion of the new religion : this was a young man named Timothy : by his mother’s side he was of Jewish extraction, but his father was a Greek, and does not appear to have ever embraced the Christian faith. This youth was, however, well instructed in the doctrine of the Gospel by his mother and his grandmother, both of whom had been converted, as is most probable, on the day of Pentecost. Timothy was a person of considerable acquirements, and no doubt very zealous in the cause of the truth. St. Paul considered him therefore as a fit companion of his missionary labours ; but in order to give no offence to the Jews, who, as he knew, would object to the teaching of a reputed heathen, the apostle caused Timothy to submit

to the rite of circumcision,—an expedient upon which we shall shortly offer a remark. It must not here be allowed to escape your notice, how great a blessing it is to have religious parents ; and, in the instance of Timothy, it is a point for the especial consideration of mothers. Although the father was a Greek, and probably knew not the salvation of God, yet, by the tender care of Eunice and Lois, the young man was formed to godliness, to which St. Paul refers with confidence as a pledge of the unfeigned faith which was in him : he calls him frequently his own son, meaning by that endearing title that he had adopted him as his spiritual assistant, and had taught him in the “ way of the Lord more perfectly<sup>1</sup>.” From Lystra he began the journey with Paul and Silas ; they carried with them the decrees of the apostolic council, and it is added that the churches were established in the faith, and increased daily.

The missionaries now bent their steps towards the Euxine Sea, and traversed the countries of Phrygia and Galatia. Their intention seems to have been to retrace their steps, and to have descended upon the western parts of Asia Minor ; but they were forbidden by the Holy Ghost to

<sup>1</sup> On the case of Timothy, and with reference to the preceding remarks on John and Mark, consult the 34th *Homily of St. Chrysostom* on Act xv. xvi. But see *Cave's Lives of the Fathers*, p. 46. Tom. I.

preach the word in Asia. It may be necessary here to remark, that the country which is usually called Asia in the apostolic writings, signifies the district in which those seven churches were situated, to which St. John addresses his Revelation; that is, the country lying between the Propontis and the Island of Rhodes, known to the classical reader by the name of Ionia, because originally colonized by Greeks. We might wonder, at first sight, why the Spirit should forbid the apostle to go into this country; but the sequel of the history shows that God in his wisdom foreknew the minds of the inhabitants. The Gospel was introduced amongst them at a later period, and some there were who believed unto salvation. Lamentable, however, is the picture of the seven churches which St. John has drawn, and soon did they make shipwreck of that faith which they received, as it was once delivered to the saints. It seemed as if God only intended to justify His mercy and the free offer of His grace in the sight of all men: He knew they would hardly believe: He foresaw what would be the end of His interposing grace: still He suffered the word to be propagated amongst them; but not until He had first called those who were a more "willing people in the day of His power;" for this cause also the Spirit suffered not the preachers to pass into the district of Bithynia. The

Providence of God is not less manifest in those countries where His word has never yet been allowed to penetrate; the inference to be drawn from which circumstance is, that “the time is not yet come;” and there are seasons and places when and where it may be said, concerning the preachers of the Gospel, “your strength is to sit still.” Happy is the man who can discern the times and the seasons, and who waits for the unequivocal signs of God’s Providence, showing that now is the time to go forth, and “compel them to come in.” In consequence of this prohibition, made manifest by some miraculous communication, the apostle and his companions came into the district of the once celebrated Troy: and it would appear from the context of the history, that St. Luke joined the sacred company here, for he says, in the 8th verse, *they* came down to Troas<sup>1</sup>; and then, after Paul had seen the vision of the man of Macedonia, he says, *we* endeavoured to go into Macedonia. The apostle now, for the first time, enters the Peninsula of Greece: he touched in a prosperous voyage at the Island of Samothracia, and thence sailed to Neapolis. We immediately find him, with his faithful companion Silas, at Philippi, and it may be

<sup>1</sup>This port, not far from the Island of Tenedos, was more anciently called Antigonia, according to Pliny. Vid. *Hist. Nat.* lib. v. cap. 30. It is now, I think, the Eski Stamboul of the Turks.

added that Timothy and Luke were there also. The events which took place at this, the chief city of that part of Macedonia, are recorded in the sixteenth chapter of the Acts, wherein we have the account of Lydia's cure, and the apostle's sufferings by stripes and imprisonment, the conversion of the jailer and his family, and the miraculous deliverance of the preachers. The narrative is most interesting : at midnight, amidst the horrors of a prison, and suffering from bodily pain, inflicted by the inhuman stripes they had received, Paul and Silas sang praises unto God, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake. There was, however, nothing abject in these holy men, nor any want of that independence of character which the men of the world so much boast of : the same Paul who sang praises at midnight in the prison, and who would most assuredly have been set down in our day as a madman and as a fanatic, made use of the most powerful language, relative to the conduct of the magistrates of Philippi, who, finding they had exceeded their authority, were afraid : " They have beaten us openly, being Romans, and have cast us into prison, and now do they thrust us out privily ? Nay verily, but let them come themselves and fetch us out." The Christian then is humble before his God, and patient in afflictions ; but he exercises his civil rights and his political

privileges; he is not abject, but bold and dignified above other men, because he doeth all things in the strength of Him whose name is Truth and Righteousness. The fellow-labourers now passed through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia, and arrived at Thessalonica, where they planted another church, composed of some believing Jews, but more Greeks, and many of them persons in the higher ranks of society. It appears from the epistles written afterwards to this church, and to which we shall shortly recur, that the Thessalonians were distinguished for their faith, and were proof against all the persecutions stirred up against them. Paul himself was the victim of the first of those persecutions; and it was only by escaping at night to the city of Berea, situated at the entrance of the peninsula of Greece, that he was saved, with his companions, from the fury of the unbelieving Jews. But the circumstance turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel; for at Berea, they received the word with all readiness of mind, and “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Paul was especially the person the Jews aimed to destroy; they followed him from Thessalonica to Berea, and he was again obliged to withdraw himself. The arrangements now made amongst the fellow-labourers were, that Paul should go alone to Athens by sea, and wait in that celebrated city,



until Silas and Timothy could join him. It is not related in the Acts that they ever did join him at Athens ; but it is intimated by Paul himself, in his Epistle to the Thessalonians, that Timothy came up to him ; for thus we read (in 1 Thess. iii. 1.), “ Wherefore when we could no longer forbear, we thought it good to be left at Athens alone : and sent Timotheus, &c. to establish you, and to comfort you concerning your faith.” And again (ver. 6.), “ when Timotheus came from you unto us, and brought us good tidings of your faith and charity, &c. we were comforted over you in all our affliction and distress, by your faith.” From these passages, therefore, it is argued, that Timothy must have come up with St. Paul at Athens ; for he could not say he was left at Athens alone, that he might send Timothy to comfort them, unless Timothy had been with him. On the other hand, it is evident that Silas was not there, otherwise Paul could not have said he was left alone, when Timothy was gone : thus upon the whole, we do not find that the three missionaries came together again until they arrived at Corinth ; for after Paul had left Athens, and had reached Corinth, we have these words (Acts xviii. 5.), “ When Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia.” Timothy, then, did not rejoin the apostle at Athens ; but went direct with Silas from Ma-

cedonia to Corinth, where we find them all three together again<sup>1</sup>. These particulars are important, because they help us to ascertain from whence the Epistles to the Thessalonians were written. You are, perhaps, already aware, that the postscripts found in our Testaments to each epistle are not genuine, but merely the additions of transcribers ; and, although in most cases correct, are not always to be depended upon<sup>2</sup> : for instance, the Epistles to the Thessalonians are said to have been written from Athens, whereas they both begin with “ Paul and Silvanus, (that is Silas,) and Timotheus.” Now, as they were all three together at Corinth only, and not at Athens, the epistles were written from the former city ; and this could not well be later than the year 52. These were the first epistles which St. Paul wrote, although they stand in the sacred canon in a different order, the epistles being arranged according to the importance of the cities to which they were severally addressed.

It would be impossible for me, in the course of these Lectures, to enter into an analysis of the epistles. I shall merely observe of the two addressed to Thessalonica, that they were written with a view to encourage and strengthen the new

<sup>1</sup> See *Palcy. Horæ Paulinæ.* 1 Thess. Nos. 3 and 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* Chap. xiv.

converts in the persecutions and difficulties to which they were exposed, and under which the apostle feared they might shrink, and so fall away from the faith. He puts them on their guard against persons of a doubtful character, who had formed some unwarrantable notions concerning the speedy coming of Christ, and the destination of departed spirits; and refers them to a conversation he had held with them about the man of sin, the son of perdition, and the mystery of iniquity, which had already begun to work, all which is very obscure to us, because we do not know what that discourse was to which he refers the Thessalonians, when he says, “Remember ye not, that when I was with you, I told you these things?” He charges them in the most solemn manner, that the epistle be read unto all the holy brethren; nor can we doubt but that it was frequently read in the public assemblies, in a manner to be understood by all: and so long as it was listened to with reverence, and received as the word of inspiration, the Church of Thessalonica stood firmly. That there is now no such church, may be attributed to the departure from the written word of God, as is the case in all those places where it has lost its ascendancy. But to return to the tenor of our history.

The preaching of St. Paul at Athens, is another

striking example of the power of the Gospel, whenever it is faithfully delivered. The zeal of the apostle was stirred up : the polite and civilized Athens being wholly given to idolatry, it had, as Pausanias informs us, more images than all the rest of Greece<sup>1</sup>. The Stoics, who considered all things to be over-ruled by an inexorable fate, and the Epicureans, who placed all happiness in the refined pleasure of sense, encountered the apostle, who preached the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, and the “ holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” What but a miracle could have induced men like these to renounce their carnal lusts and worldly maxims, in order to embrace a pure religion, like that of the meek and lowly Jesus ? They reasoned and argued with Paul, with all the subtilty, no doubt, for which the schools of Greece were distinguished, and the apostle met them upon their own ground, showing that there was one great moving Cause, the Maker of all things in heaven and in earth, a self-existent intelligence, which their own Socrates and other wise men had not scrupled to avow ; endeavouring with zeal to counteract the presumption of man, that had presumed to liken to an image the perfection of that God “ Whose

<sup>1</sup> The reader is here referred to the excellent notes of Doddridge, in his Family Expositor. *Acts. sect. xl.*

offspring we are," in whom we live and move and have our being. "We ought not to think," says the eloquent preacher, "that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art, and man's device : the times of this ignorance God winked at." And think ye, my brethren, that those times have passed away? or that there is not still need of a Paul to declare unto these generations the God whom they ignorantly worship? The zeal is wanting : the stirring up of the spirit within is, I fear, the deficiency ; for verily there want neither Stoics, nor Epicureans, nor whole cities given to idolatry. The result of Paul's preaching was the conversion of some of those idolaters and philosophers, and amongst them Dionysius, a member of the great council called Areopagus. This man was probably the first bishop, or overseer of the Christian Church at Athens, and he is the St. Denys, of whom so many fables and foolish legends are related, concerning his journey into France, his extraordinary martyrdom, &c. : the woman named Damaris is supposed by St. Chrysostom to have been the wife of Dionysius, and therefore it ought to be so rendered as the original Greek will bear<sup>1</sup>. Let

<sup>1</sup> See *Cave's Lives of the Fathers*, Tom. I, p. 69. Hilduin, Abbot of St. Denys, was, it appears, the first retailer of the obscure traditions concerning this saint, under the powerful protection of Charlemagne. (*Ibid.* p. 71.)

then the philosopher and the sceptic who think themselves wise above that which is written, and pretend to see no truth in the humble religion of Jesus, contemplate the apostle standing in the midst of Mar's Hill, and putting to silence the learned men of Athens by the sublime but simple declaration of a Great First moving Cause, Self-existent and Intelligent: the responsibility and dependence of the creature upon their Creator, and the judgment which, by all that is just and reasonable in our nature and our notions of things, must one day take place: and herein he will find subjects for his philosophy; but if he must needs believe that, which, to say the least, seems a reasonable thing, then let him not renounce the assurance which God has given of the truth, in that "He hath raised up Jesus from the dead."

We have now traced the apostle in his second extensive journey through the whole length of Asia Minor, and in other different directions of that continent; thence across the Greek sea to the country of Macedonia, bordering upon Thrace; thence along the east side of the peninsula of Greece, and to that part of the present Morea, which was called Achaia, the chief place of which was Corinth.

It was here announced to Paul that the Lord had much people in that city; and consequently

he continued there a year and a half, teaching the word of God among them. His manner of living takes away all suspicion from the most fastidious mind, that he had in view any interested motives in "preaching the kingdom of God." It happened a little before his arrival at Corinth, that the Emperor Claudius had banished all Jews from Rome, and amongst them, all those Jews who had embraced Christianity, concerning the merits of whose religious tenets the heathen emperors could not judge<sup>1</sup>. A man named Aquila, a native of Pontus, and his wife Priscilla, were amongst the banished: with these persons Paul lived, following his occupation of a tent-maker, in partnership with Aquila. "He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath-day, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks;" so that it should seem that during the week he had attended

<sup>1</sup> This edict of Claudius (alluded to by Suetonius in vit. Claud. cap. 25) is supposed to have taken place in the ninth year of that emperor's reign, A. D. 50, at the latest. It is said in Acts xviii. 1. that Aquila and his wife had *lately* arrived at Corinth; in consequence this brings Paul from Athens to Corinth in the year 50, or a short time after the edict. If we suppose his stay at Corinth not to have exceeded two years, his Epistles to the Thessalonians must have been written, as I have already observed, before the year 53. This manner of reckoning might still leave a space of nearly two years from the apostolic council to Paul's arrival at Corinth.

to his occupation, and on the proper days for public worship had preached the Gospel of Christ. From his friend Aquila he would doubtless learn many particulars of the state of Rome ; and it was probably during this intercourse that he first conceived the idea of visiting the metropolis of the world. After the matter which took place at Corinth about Sosthenes, and the indifference displayed by the Pro-consul Junius Gallio, it is written, that Paul “ tarried there yet a good while,” which period, added to the former year and six months, will yield for the probable residence of the apostle at Corinth, in all about two years. At length he took leave of the Corinthians, in company with Aquila and Priscilla, and went by sea towards Syria. On this occasion we are informed that Paul, having made a vow according to the law of Moses, in conformity with the custom of the Nazarites, in the port of Cenchrea, shaved his head. Ever active, and living for no other cause than that of the Gospel, he touched on his voyage at the Ionian coast, and suffered not the opportunity to pass by of going up to Ephesus, and reasoning with the Jews. It is not improbable but that the circumstance of his having taken upon him this Nazaritish vow, and expressing to them his wish to be at Jerusalem, by all means to keep the feast, might have made that favourable impression upon the



Jews who were at Ephesus, which is implied in their pressing him “to tarry longer time with them.” Such are the benefits resulting from an outward conformity to the customs of those we are anxious to win over to the truth, observing, at the same time, that St. Paul made no compromise either of principle or of the faith of Christ. He refused to remain at Ephesus at that time, but promised to return there, which he did after his visit to Jerusalem. So little is said of this visit, that it would appear he had no other object in it than to keep his vow, and after this ceremony was accomplished, he went to the metropolitan Church at Antioch, where “he spent some time.” The indefatigable apostle did not remain long before he undertook another long journey : he travelled again through all Galatia and Phrygia, in order to strengthen the disciples. The joy with which he was received on that occasion by the Galatians may be seen in his Epistle written to them under very different circumstances : “Where is the blessedness ye spake of ? For I bear you record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.”

The principal person who had succeeded to the authority of St. Paul in the Church at Corinth, was a native of Alexandria, a Jew by birth, named Apollos ; and whilst he mightily

convinced the Jews out of the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ, the scene of Paul's labours was confined to Ephesus. For the space of three months he disputed in the synagogues, offering the kingdom of heaven, first to the Jews, as was his custom ; but when they hardened their hearts and spake evil of the Gospel, the apostle betook himself to one of the schools of philosophy, at the head of which was one Tyrannus. There he continued to deliver his discourses for two years without interruption ; and his ministry was sanctioned by miracles, which he was enabled to work for the confirmation of the truth. It is even said, that by this continued labour for so long a period, all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks. The force of truth was irresistible, notwithstanding the opposition of the Jews, and the word of God mightily grew and prevailed. From the farewell sermon of St. Paul at Miletus, we learn that his ministry lasted altogether for three years ; its success was witnessed by the image-maker, Demetrius, who declared that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, he had persuaded and turned away much people from the gods made with hands : the uproar that was raised in consequence of the appeal of Demetrius to his townsmen, drove the apostle from Asia. Again he took refuge in

Greece, from the fury of the Jews, and there remained three months. All this took place before he was able to fulfil the intention expressed in the words I have prefixed to this Lecture. It was then his purpose to pass through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, and finally to visit Rome. We have, therefore, still to trace the apostle's labours through these successive scenes, with which the sacred narrative ends.

The great object of St. Paul now was to be at Jerusalem, for the festival of Pentecost, knowing that he would then have an opportunity of preaching to the Jews assembled from all countries ; but he did not wish to leave the scene of his labours, until he had, in his own person, commended the Churches to the grace of God. The sacred historian gives us a most accurate geographical account of the apostle's voyage among the islands of the Egean Sea, which may be traced in the xxth chapter of the Acts. They finally arrived at Miletus, and Paul having but a short time to spend in Asia, sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the Church, and made them the address which has ever since been the model of a faithful minister's duty to the flock committed to his charge. There is, perhaps, no scene more interesting than that of a faithful labourer in the vineyard of Christ appealing to the souls committed to his care, for a testimony of his diligence and anxiety for their

eternal welfare : happy the minister who can say with Paul, “ I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.” The sentiments and the language employed in the farewell address at Miletus, can never fail to make the deepest impression upon the minister and the congregation, who have been bound together by the ties of mutual affection, which the inculcation of the truth creates. But when the affecting words were uttered, “ I know that all ye among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more,” how can we pretend to paint the tenderness and the feeling of sorrow which broke out in that pious assembly ? The recital is simple, but it contains a world of sympathy, such as no sentiment of any other kind can excite or produce : “ they all wept sore, and fell on Paul’s neck, and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more, and they accompanied him to the ship.” There we shall leave them standing upon the shore, and watching with tearful eyes the vessel on the waves which conveyed far from their coasts their spiritual father and their friend. We, my brethren, can have no such pretensions, either on my part as the minister, or on yours, as the flock which it is my lot to tend, even if I could be supposed to be addressing you for the last time. Can I bid you remember, that I have

not ceased to warn you day and night with tears ? How I am put to confusion ! or can ye say, that as faithful children ye have walked in the truth ? But this I will call to your remembrance, that I have not shunned to declare to you the only way of salvation through a crucified Saviour, the grace of God which alone bringeth peace, and the enmity against God which reigns in our fallen nature. And when we are far asunder, brethren, as we shall soon be (and many of you shall probably see my face no more), still I may so far say, remember that I warned you earnestly, at least in the public assembly, that unless ye live a life by faith in the Son of God, having embraced the offer of mercy through the blood of the covenant, and become his children by adoption ; unless ye perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord, coming out from the corrupt maxims and practices of this evil world ; remember, that I have ever said, ye will have no peace with God ; and let this be my witness, when you and I shall appear before the tribunal of Christ, to answer for the talents committed to our care.

The visit of Paul to Jerusalem, and the things which befel him there, brings the sacred narrative to the year 60 : this and the remaining part of it we shall reserve for the next two Sundays, there is a subject which it is of material import-

ance to examine at this stage of the apostolic labours.

The Epistle which is next in chronological order after those to the Thessalonians, is that to the Galatians; it is usually thought to have been written in the year 58, and consequently could not have been sent from Rome, as the postscript declares. It was, in all probability, written some time during the three years Paul passed at Ephesus; but it is the occasion on which it was written, that especially demands our attention. You will recollect the first attempt that was made to intermix the leaven of the Pharisees with the Christian faith, and the consequent decision of the apostolic council at Jerusalem. In the Churches of Galatia this perversion appeared in a much more full and dangerous form: “I marvel” saith Paul, “that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.” And so nearly had this heresy prevailed, and so completely were many of those professing Christians overcome by its deception, that he stands in doubt of them, whether his labours had not been in vain. The doctrine which the first teachers of Christianity every where taught was justification, as including a title to final salvation by faith alone. Now there came amongst those Galatians

certain Jews who had embraced the Gospel as a convenient system to be added to their own, and they insisted that circumcision and other works of the law were absolutely necessary to their justification : these were the Judaizing Christians which caused so much trouble in the infancy of the Church. In order to establish their own authority, they had attempted to undermine that of Paul, insinuating that he was no real apostle, that he had never been with Christ, and could therefore only know His religion through means of others, having learnt it perhaps of some who but imperfectly understood it. It was to rebut this charge and to correct the error, that Paul wrote this Epistle : he begins by showing that his commission was directly from Heaven, that he conferred not with man, but received all he had taught them by immediate revelation, and then he enters upon the main question. Justification by works is opposed to the whole system of the Gospel, and it is not less a stumbling-block to the unbelievers of this than it was to the Jews of St. Paul's day. The law of righteousness men will not seek by faith, but as it were by the deeds of the law. If a man be required to perform a certain duty, especially if it have the air of a religious exercise, and he be promised, in return, a meritorious reward ; provided he can be persuaded that such reward awaits him, he may perhaps set about

the task, and in this way delight to seek his justification ; but this the Scripture calls carnal, for the obvious reason that the heart and affections are untouched by it—the Divine operation, which is necessary to change the inner man, and is the very essence of a spiritual religion, is entirely omitted. A religion of this kind is very easily established, because it disturbs not the consciences of men, while it puts salvation into their own power ; and if even the tasks allotted to them were painful, or the exercise were tedious, they would not shrink from doing it, and would hence derive their self-complacency and fallacious peace. But this is superstition, not the religion of the Gospel. There is no extent to which such a system as this may not be carried, and the more the ignorance and the vice of man prevail, the more readily are materials furnished for the practice and the preservation of their self-delusion. This, brethren, is the doctrine of justification by works, to which the Gospel is so opposed, and it will not in the least improve it, if a little portion of faith be added : the system will still be erroneous. This was the Galatian heresy ; for you cannot but observe that it makes no matter what the works are, if they be put forward as a ground of justification, the danger and the error are the same. St. Paul argues the case thus : “ I testify to every man that is circumcised (who expects,



by his conformity to these rites, to be justified), that he is a debtor to do the whole law :” that is, if a man will take the law for his justification, he must abide by the issue, but let him observe this, if he does not keep the whole of it, but only offends in one point, he is guilty of all, and consequently comes under condemnation ; whereas “ there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus,” so that the apostle called this law a yoke of bondage with which those Galatians had again entangled themselves. In this erroneous view of a title to God’s favour, the doctrine of free grace cannot penetrate : Christ becomes of no effect, if we think to justify ourselves, or even partly to justify ourselves, we are certainly fallen from grace. That which is an act of free mercy, cannot at the same time be a reward of merit. The Gospel admits of no compromise, brethren, in this leading feature ; either Christ is a Saviour, completely so, or else he is of none effect : once let a man be persuaded that any work, however good, avails to his justification, and then, to say nothing of the pride which necessarily results from such a thought, it must diminish so much from the sovereignty of grace, and the value of that redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Suppose I were persuaded to go on a long pilgrimage, and gave all my goods to feed the poor, with the view of saving my soul, how could I be per-

suated at the same time that Christ was the only Saviour, and that through His blood alone was remission of sins? If we be to be our own saviours, which we should be if works availed for justification, then verily, as St. Paul saith, Christ is dead in vain. You will say then, wherein do good works stand? or in what place cometh the moral law? The law is fulfilled in one word, saith the same apostle, “thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” “This, then, I say,” continues he, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh; if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.” By all which expressions we are to understand, that in order to be in a condition to do good works,—we must first be justified by faith alone; out of which faith, the good works are to spring: and what is this but to contend for purity of principle, the only safeguard of moral conduct? And this will be the difference—the works of the Spirit, which are really good works, will spring up in rich abundance, as the water bubbles in continued supplies from the copious spring,—not works to be offered unto God as a matter of merit, much less of justification, for this would necessarily create pride in the heart; but as an offering to God, acceptable only through Christ—as the very production of that grace or well-spring of life which He hath given. This process you know, is fre-

quently illustrated in the Scriptures, by the tree and its fruit, whereby it is declared, that the tree being good, necessarily produces good fruit ; but the fruit maketh not the tree. I confess, it has often surprised me, in the course of my limited experience, to find men of strong minds and pious dispositions, contending against this wholesome and scriptural doctrine<sup>1</sup> ; as if it were possible to “gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles :” as if men did not work better from disinterested than from selfish motives : in short, as if it were not God’s truth, that fallen man must first be reinstated, and put into the path of righteousness, before he can be expected to walk in it. The Galatians, then, were tainted with this fatal error, and this it is which has been in all ages, in some shape or other, so hurtful to the truth of the Gospel. It was evident in the circumcision of those Jews of Galatia : it was the substance of the “vain talk” of the Pelagians : it was shown in those ages of monkish

<sup>1</sup> “It is a childish cavil,” says Hooker, in his discourse of justification, &c. “wherewith, in the matter of justification, our adversaries do so greatly please themselves, exclaiming, that we tread all Christian virtues under our feet, and require nothing in Christians but faith, because we teach that faith alone justifieth.” The restoration of this Scripture doctrine, was the grand theological feature of the Reformation, and is still the secret spring of all genuine piety, and Christian practice.

piety, when heaven was thought to be purchased by bodily pain ; and the age of the greatest crime has especially been the age of justification by works : it is still evident in the man of more refined merit, who thanketh God that he is not as other men are, unjust, extortioners, nor as the despised publican, and all because he fasteth twice in the week, and pays tithes of all that he possesses. Take heed, brethren, in whatever form this pride of our fallen nature assaults you, that you “ go not about to establish your own righteousness, without submitting to the righteousness of God, which is by faith : ” pray that ye may “ worthily lament your sins, and acknowledge your wretchedness,” and then ye will most assuredly, as those that are sick, find the need of a physician : then will open out to your astonished view, the free mercy and the gift of God, in Christ Jesus ; and ye will begin to acknowledge, with all your boasted goodness, that if Christ had not become unto you wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, ye must for ever have perished, for not one, but “ all have sinned,” and “ the wages of sin is death.”

I have dwelt thus much upon this subject of justification, because it is an important doctrine ; and I think, if the Epistle to the Galatians be read, bearing these things in mind, the mind of

St. Paul will be understood therein, and ye, brethren, will see for yourselves, that we speak “the truth as it is in Jesus;” and we know and are persuaded, that “as many as walk according to this rule, peace resteth on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God;” “for being justified by faith,” says the apostle in another place, “we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

We would, therefore ask, my brethren, in conclusion, whether ye can conscientiously say, ye have arrived at that peace? For, if it be not a mere fancy, which the Scriptures hold out to us, but a reality, it must be possible to arrive at it; and if it be capable of realization, the question certainly admits of an answer, providing we will but deal honestly with our consciences. It may further be inquired, whether having laid aside all our virtues, as a ground of recommendation to God’s favour, we have sought for our justification, only in the redemption which is through Christ? If this be the case, ye know it is said, that the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin: and it will be but needless striving about words, to say that our doctrine annuls the moral law; for, if ye be dead to sin through Christ, who liveth in you, how can ye be the servants of sin? Shall ye not rather be the servants of Him to whom ye obey, that is, Christ the

Lord? and this, brethren, is the Gospel, which was planted throughout all Asia and Greece, and Syria, and Palestine; this is the Gospel which we seek to impart to such of you as have not yet arrived at a competent and a heartfelt knowledge of it: and these are the eternal truths which, through the blessing of God, we will continue, “through evil report and good report,” to proclaim, according to our ability, wherever it shall please the Almighty disposer of all things to call us, testifying to all men none other things than what the apostles did preach, “repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.” May the Lord attend us with his blessing, and to Him be all the glory and the praise. Amen.

## LECTURE V.

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ST. PAUL'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM, AFTER HIS  
LABOURS IN THE EAST, INCLUDING A REVIEW  
OF THE CHURCHES, AND THE REST OF HIS ACTS,  
UNTIL HIS DEPARTURE FOR ROME.

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Acts xxi. 17—20.

*And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified God.*

WHEN we come to compare attentively those prophecies which relate to the Messiah's kingdom with the first spread of Christianity in the East, more especially with the labours of St. Paul, we see the propriety of the apostle's invariably referring the Jews to their own Scriptures, in proof of what they asserted concerning the king-

dom of God. More than seven hundred years before the period of its accomplishment, Isaiah had foretold, when speaking of the Messiah's kingdom, that "out of Zion should go forth a law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem;" and in many other places of the prophetic writings we find similar predictions. When the Redeemer opened the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures, He pointed out to them, amongst other things, how it was written, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem: and, agreeably to these Scriptures, He gave His express commandment to them, that they should wait at Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on high; they were then to bear witness of Him first in Jerusalem, next in all Judea, after that in Samaria, and finally unto the uttermost parts of the earth. Now, supposing any one were to institute an inquiry into the external evidences of Christianity, with a view to convince himself of its Divine origin, the first question that would suggest itself would be this:—Did the men who had received their commission in so authoritative a manner as to indicate a perfect knowledge of what should come to pass, effect the task imposed upon them? Because, if a Being in the form of a man, speaking in human accents, without any



earthly power or authority, should command a number of illiterate men to go forth, and, by declaring certain doctrines and precepts, to change the views and practices of whole cities and countries, and they should really accomplish their commission, since there never was, under all the circumstances, a similar transaction upon earth, as a mere matter of history, it is extraordinary. But that this Being, who gave the commission, should refer to what had been said by prophets, on this subject, many hundred years before; and, taking up the spirit of these predictions, should reduce them all into one grand scheme, and unequivocally foretell the speedy accomplishment of the whole, as it actually came to pass, it can never satisfy any well-conditioned understanding, any reasonable and inquiring mind<sup>1</sup>, to say, that this was merely extraordinary: if the whole be true, it is divine: it is the work of no power, of no intelligence, less than Supreme. In following with me the history of the transactions which took place soon after Christ had given His commission to the apostles, you have seen how faithfully all things were done: first with regard to Jerusalem, then in all Judea, and next

<sup>1</sup> Il est impossible d'envisager toutes les preuves de la religion Chrétienne, ramassées ensemble, sans en ressentir la force à laquelle nul homme raisonnable ne peut résister. *Pensées de Pascal*, ii. part. art. 4.

in Samaria. You have also contemplated the glorious opening of the door of faith to the Gentile world, which extends to the uttermost parts of the earth. The former part of this commission is geographically defined ; for Jerusalem, all Judea, and Samaria, are known ; but the latter portion of it is conveyed in a form of words which can only be explained by the usual phraseology of the inspired writers. The earth, as it was then understood, signified little more than those habitable parts of the globe which were under the Roman dominion, and the Roman empire is called, by St. Luke, all the habitable world ; in a literal and restricted sense, therefore, the uttermost parts of the earth implied no more than the most remote limits of the Roman empire in the east and in the west. It would not be difficult to show that the words have an ulterior meaning, nor yet that our Lord looked forward to a more remote period, when the knowledge of His salvation should be literally extended to the most distant regions of the globe ; just as when predicting the fall of Jerusalem, He speaks of his second coming to judgment, through the medium, as it were, of His judgment upon that rebellious city. That, however, which concerns our subject is the limited and more immediate sense, in which the expression, the uttermost parts of the earth, is to be understood ; and we are

already prepared to take a review of one half of its accomplishment. I have already had occasion to observe, that taking Jerusalem as the point of his departure, the city of Corinth was the most distant limit of Paul's journey towards the west, until his voyage to Rome. It is intimated, that he went a considerable way to the north west, along the coast of the Adriatic Sea. During his residence at Corinth, he wrote his Epistle to the Romans, and sent it by Phœbe, a deaconess of the neighbouring Church of Cenchrea ; and, in enumerating the countries through which he had passed, he tells them, that, from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum, he had fully preached the kingdom of God ; so that he describes a wider field of his labour than that recorded in the Acts. St. Paul does not say he penetrated into Illyricum, but merely that he arrived on the borders of it<sup>1</sup>. In his Second Epistle to Timothy, he says, that Titus had gone to Dalmatia, which was doubtless for the purpose of visiting the church in that country ; from which we infer, that, by the borders of Illyricum, is to be understood, Dalmatia—where the apostle planted Christianity. The Gospel, therefore, appears to have been preached by Paul himself in much of

<sup>1</sup> *Paley, Horæ Paulinæ*, No. IV. chap. i.

that country which is now known as Turkey in Europe, even as far as the river Danube, which was the proper limit of the Roman Empire towards the north. The mission of St. Peter was chiefly confined to the Jews, and we almost invariably find him concerned in some question concerning the rite of circumcision, or other custom of the Mosaic law<sup>1</sup>. His Epistles were addressed to the Jews only, whom he calls “strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”—in most of which countries churches were established; but Peter did not write to them—he wrote to the scattered strangers of the tribes of Israel, dated his Epistle from Babylon, and sent it round those countries by Silas, St. Paul’s former companion. He mentions Mark, whom Barnabas had taken to Cyprus, as being with him at Babylon. There is, indeed, a diversity of opinion, as to whether the Babylon here spoken of by St. Peter signifies Rome; and it appears to us that too much importance has been attached, by all parties, to the result of such a controversy. Certainly all those countries enumerated by St. Peter, lay towards the river Euphrates, the eastern boundary of the empire, and consequently were nearer the Chaldean Babylon than to Rome; besides, Silvanus

<sup>1</sup> Gal. ii. 8.

seems to have remained in the east, nor is there any reason to suppose that Mark did not travel over Asia before he went to Rome<sup>1</sup>; but without

<sup>1</sup> 1 Peter v. 12, 13. This is supposed to be Mark the Evangelist, and tradition says, he was at that time writing his Gospel under the direction of St. Peter. If, by Babylon, the apostle means Rome, (which, although not clear, I am not inclined to dispute,) his Epistle must have been written either before Paul came to Rome, or after he was gone. It was not written before, that is, before the year 62, or else he could not have said (1 Pet. iv. 7.), “The end of all things is at hand?” meaning the destruction of Jerusalem (compare v. 17, 18.); accordingly, we have not the least hint that St. Paul found Peter at Rome on his arrival, nor that they were contemporaries during his first residence, for in none of his Epistles does he ever deliver a salutation from Peter. In reading the 21st verse of the 4th chapter of the 2d of Timothy, it is impossible to suppose St. Peter was then in the same city with Paul, or even had been lately there (compare 2 Tim. iv. 10 to 17.); and yet this Epistle was written when Paul came *the second time* to Rome. Peter’s Second Epistle was evidently written after Paul’s (see chap. iii. 15, 16.); nor do I think there was any long space between the two Epistles of Peter (ibid. chap. iii. verse 1.). There is no finding St. Peter at Rome at all, upon *Scripture authority*, which is rather opposed to the notion. Those who contend for the fact, must rely entirely on ecclesiastical history, which is so very affirmative, that we must endeavour to reconcile it with Scripture, and I can see no other way of doing this, but by supposing St. Peter to have come to Rome a little before his crucifixion, where (it is possible) he met with St. Paul (2 Pet. iii. 15.); it is also just possible he might have been at Rome in the interval between Paul’s first and second residence, when he wrote his first Epistle, which

pleading for a Christian church at Babylon, it will be sufficiently apparent, from the Epistle of Peter and other intimations, that Christianity was established in all the coasts of the Euxine Sea, until it bordered on what is now the Russian empire. Among the converts, on the day of Pentecost, we find some Medes and some Elamites—the latter (according to the explanation given by Josephus) being Persians ; there were also some inhabitants of the places about Mesopotamia, so that we may infer, from the whole, that the Gospel was carried far beyond the Euphrates, not by the apostles, but by their converts. And there is every reason to suppose that those signs of Christianity, which have been discovered in India, and even in China, are the vestiges of some communications made by the first converts at Jerusalem. Besides these, there were some from that part of Africa called, by the ancients, Libya, and others from Egypt—hence sprung the churches of Carthage, and Alexandria, which produced such men as Augustine and Origen. And, in short, by pursuing this inquiry into a more extended detail, we might find the religion of Jesus in very remote parts of the world in the apostolic age. But to return to the narrative of

accommodation may adjust the suit of some Protestant writers *versus* Baronius ! without detriment to either side.

Paul's voyage from the coast of Asia to Jerusalem.

We left the elders and brethren of Miletus and Ephesus standing on the sea-shore, and watching, upon the waves of the Egean Sea, the vessel in which the apostle had embarked, and which was now steering, with a straight course, to the island of Coos ; from thence he went to Rhodes, and afterwards to Patara. Here he went on board another vessel which was bound for Palestine, and, sailing to the south of the island of Cyprus, and towards the coast of Syria, he touched at the city of Tyre ; he was attended by St. Luke and “ a company ” of other disciples, and at Tyre they had an opportunity of remaining seven days with their fellow-christians whom they unexpectedly found there. We have here another of those affecting scenes which show us how religion can touch the finest feelings of the heart, and excite the most tender sympathy. The Christians of Tyre having a presentiment that the apostle, in going up to Jerusalem, would have to endure much suffering, and perhaps not escape with his life, show their affectionate concern for his welfare. The whole of this happy society, not excepting their wives and their children, accompanied the beloved disciples, till they were out of the city, and then, without altar or temple (for they knew that God dwelleth not in

temples made with hands, but in the temple of the body of true believers), they kneeled down on the sea-shore, and there offered up their prayers, with one accord, to Him who had washed and redeemed them with his own blood. They finally bade each other farewell, the sorrowing multitude of the faithful returning to the city, and the missionaries sailing to the next port, which was Ptolemais. Here also was a society of Christians, with whom they spent a day, and the day following they finished their voyage at Cæsarea, the seat of the Roman government in Judea. We are here introduced anew to a celebrated Scripture character, which has been lost sight of for many years in our narrative. In the year 34, Philip the deacon, after converting the eunuch of Ethiopia, and preaching along the coast of Judea, took up his residence at Cæsarea; and now, at the end of 26 years, we still find him in that city, a faithful labourer in the vineyard of the Lord. He is called the Evangelist, or preacher of the Gospel, by which we are to understand that he had not arrived at that superior order in the church which constituted an overseer or bishop; he probably did not travel far from his place of residence<sup>1</sup>, having to “provide for his own household.” He was a married

<sup>1</sup> See *Cave's Lives of the Primitive Fathers*, Tom. I. p. 32.



man, and his four daughters are mentioned as being endued with the spirit of prophecy. He received Paul and his fellow-travellers with hospitality : and they remained for many days together, speaking to one another in Christian love, and enjoying the communion of the Holy Spirit. During the period of their residence with him, the fortitude of Paul was put to the proof, and we cannot fail to admire the undaunted firmness and zeal with which he prosecuted his calling. A prophet named Agabus came from Judea, and, by a significant representation, showed him the evils and afflictions which, beyond doubt, would happen to him if he went to Jerusalem. The prediction was eventually fulfilled, for the Jews “bound him, and delivered him over to the Gentiles ;” but none of these things, in the prospect, moved the man of God from his purpose : he counted not his life dear unto himself, so that he might finish his course and the ministry he had received, with joy and success. His was not the act of the unfeeling bigot, nor of the headstrong zealot, regardless of the tender concern shown by his friends for his welfare : there was no want of sentimental affection in our great apostle : his pathetic feelings responded to every sincere appeal ; but his line of duty could not for a moment be abandoned. In the instance before us, the whole company at Cesarea entreated Paul,

with tears in their eyes, to avoid those evils which awaited him in the devoted city. “What, mean ye to weep,” says the tender-hearted servant of Jesus, “and to break mine heart?” This was the man of feeling, in all the exercise of friendship and brotherly love; but now is to be exhibited the minister of Christ—the bold and uncompromising witness of Him who became obedient unto death, that we might live.—“I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.” The resignation of the audience is as admirable as the fortitude of the speaker: “when he would not be persuaded,” says the historian, “we ceased, saying the will of the Lord be done.” What lessons of Christian piety and holy conduct do we find in this simple and sublime history. Why are there now no scenes like these? no such disinterested affection? no such meek and heavenly resignation? no such well-directed zeal for the truth? How do we feel humbled before such superior attainments in Christian fortitude and piety as these primitive believers seem to have arrived at! For verily, brethren, matters hardly ever appear to be on a right footing in this our day of religious light; there are some of whom we may bear record, that they have a zeal, but it is without knowledge or prudence: and there are others who have much knowledge, but

neither activity nor zeal. There is, moreover, so much of apathy and inglorious ease in the christian cause, whilst even in the enjoyment of christian privileges, that one might think there were no more of the Lord's battles to be fought; or the reign of Christ were no longer opposed, or the Gospel had penetrated into the uttermost parts of the earth! And then, in the examination of private character, even of those who profess to "love the Lord Jesus in sincerity," what unsubdued pride, what unevenness of temper do we find: what dispositions to gainsaying and contention about things which do not profit: what Corinthian folly about Paul's party and Apollo's doctrine, and Cephas's views! Look, my brethren, upon the sea shore of Tyre, and see what a goodly company of apostles, teachers, men, women, and children, were united in one solemn act of worship, all thinking the same thing, all devoted to the same cause, all depending for their salvation on the same Redeemer. Oh! for the spirit of love, unity, and concord, that we might once more present, in the face of Heaven, a lovely scene like that of Tyre, so that all, who are not of us, might be induced to turn aside and say, "come, let us see this thing which is come to pass in our coasts, whereby many are become righteous?" This we shall do, brethren, as soon as we shall have fully comprehended with all saints,

what is the height, and breadth, and depth ; and known the love of God which passeth all understanding.

Paul and his company proceeded from Cesarea to Jerusalem, where they were received with that distinction which belonged to men who had hazarded their lives for the name of the Lord Jesus. Not more than a day had elapsed before a general assembly of the elders took place, with James at their head, to hear the interesting details of Paul's labours : his report of them was confined to the Gentile converts : it was no marvellous story about his own adventures, nor of the manner in which he had gained distinctions, nor of the number of influential persons with whom he had been in intercourse ; but it was a simple declaration of the things that " God had wrought among the Gentiles," by his ministry. It was a question of men's souls, with these servants of God, and of the increase and glory of Christ's kingdom on earth, and not that they gloried in the new system which had been committed to them, as to exalted authorities and masters among their fellow-creatures. When they had heard Paul's account, " they glorified God," ascribing all the effects to the real cause, not taking any honour to themselves : there was a disinterested and unaffected humility in these apostles and elders of the church, which is

worth the consideration of all churchmen and all preachers of the gospel—"they glorified God."

Jerusalem, at this period, offers at once a glorious and a melancholy spectacle. From that city, as from the source of it, proceeded the light of truth, which, like the beams of the sun, was to penetrate into every corner of the globe. The daughter of Zion was once more the glory and the joy of the whole earth. The word of the Lord went out from her, and the account of its success was returned by "the company of preachers," to whom God had given the word: that was the last and loveliest blaze of its glory, which appeared just before the twilight, and then sunk into eternal night. The church of Jerusalem bound and loosed, decided upon all matters of the Levitical law, declared what might be done, and what might not be done, by the professors of the new religion: in short, the glorious things which had been spoken by the prophets concerning her were fulfilled. But on the other hand, the awful predictions of our Lord were hanging over her: the things that belonged to her peace were now so hidden from her eyes, that all opportunity of repentance was lost for ever: a few more years were but to expire, and the walls of Zion were to be laid even with the dust: God had done His own work by her, and had thus fulfilled

the prophecies, “for He is not a man that He should lie:” nevertheless, He vindicated His injured name and laws, and gave over to destruction the people who had crucified the Lord of Glory, and shed the blood of so many righteous men. (And shall it not be so with every city which hath despised the true God, and made to themselves gods after their own inventions? Shall not the measure of iniquity be filled up? Yea, have we not seen other places fall, which are still trodden under foot, if not by the beasts of the earth, yet by earthly tyrants: places wherein the word of God once flourished, but was afterwards abandoned? It does not the less excite our commiseration, for that we have nothing to do but to exercise pity and compassion upon every measure of human suffering and degradation. God alone knoweth His own designs; and, as the moral Governor of the world, He can prevent a greater multitude of evils by a timely interposition, although accompanied with His judgment; in this consisteth His mercy; it is for us to adore His inscrutable Providence.)

The proceedings of St. Paul at Jerusalem and at Cesarea, before he finally sailed for Italy, together with his celebrated defences and apologies for the faith, are recorded in the 21st and the five following chapters of the book of the Acts of the Apostles: the greatest difficulties

he had to contend against, arose from the people of his own nation ; of whose rage and malice he was the special object. There were at that time thousands of believing Jews, and other apostles besides Paul at Jerusalem ; but against no one of them seems to have been excited the same degree of hatred, as against him. The reason of which was this : he insisted so strongly upon the leading doctrine of justification by faith, of which his views were most luminous, that he was considered on that account an avowed enemy to all the Mosaical institutions ; whereas, had they understood his doctrine, and arrived at that humble dependence upon the atonement of Christ for salvation, which he laboured to enforce, they would have seen, that his only aim was to divest the creature of his self-sufficiency and pride, and of all his pretensions or claims to the Divine favour, through any outward privileges, or conformity to the law of Moses. At the suggestion of James and the Presbytery, however, he did not scruple to take upon him a Nazarethish vow, and go through all the forms required in the ceremonious observance of it. Paul evidently did not wish to exhibit any obstinacy in a matter of no great importance in itself, and therefore he conformed with the request of the elders ; although he no doubt knew, at the same time, that unless the hearts of these Jews were con-

verted, and they were instructed in the new and living way, a conformity of this kind would be of little service, for it was not Paul but Jesus they persecuted. The appalling question once put to him, was, “Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” and yet he was then persecuting men and women; but they were believers in Jesus. And this, brethren, is the real state of the case: the opposition which is exhibited against those who sincerely and truly live unto God, and endeavour to keep a conscience void of offence, is against the Gospel itself: it is not any outward concession that will change that persecuting spirit, so long as it is known the individual pleads for spiritual-mindedness, as totally opposed to the spirit of the world. But this character of the religion of Jesus, and of the indifferent and unthinking world, never changes; as he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now: not in the same form, indeed; for there are worldly considerations, and different degrees of zeal: there is serpent-subtilty and infidel indifference, but the spirit is the same. No man will sit easy under the tacit sentence which is pronounced upon his want of religion by his neighbour, who exhibits it in all words and actions: ye may expect those things, brethren, if ye resolve to dedicate yourselves to the service of



God, and to live as candidates for eternity. Scarcely had the seven days which were required for Paul's observance of his vow, elapsed, before the truth of these remarks was verified. When certain Jews of Asia, who had heard him preach in their own country, and now saw him with a Greek of the name of Trophimus, recognised him in the temple, they stirred up the people, and all the city was thrown into commotion. The military commander, Lysias, was obliged to interfere; but so little did he understand the occasion of the uproar, that he took it up as a continuation of the sedition which had taken place five years before, the circumstances of which were these: There came to Jerusalem, in the year 55, an impostor from Egypt, giving himself out as a prophet<sup>1</sup>. (Christ had said, false prophets and false Christs should arise among them, and there were several of that description previous to the destruction of Jerusalem.) This man persuaded a number of persons to follow him out of the city to the Mount of Olives, and from thence he pretended they would see the walls of Jerusalem fall down at a sign to be given by him, so that they might immediately go in and take possession of it as their own. Felix, the

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Joseph. Antiquitat.* Lib. xx. c. 4. p. 886. Tom. II. *Edit. Oxon.* 1720. *Ib. de Bell. Jud.* Lib. ii. c. 13. Id. p. 1075.

governor, having received intelligence of this commotion, in which 4,000 persons were concerned, went against them with a sufficient force, killed four hundred, and took two hundred of them prisoners, the rest fled, the leader himself also making his escape. “Art thou that Egyptian,” said this ignorant officer to the apostle, “which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers?” Paul showed no marks of rude indignation at so preposterous and unjust a charge; he answered with dignified simplicity, never losing sight of his Master’s cause. “I am a man, which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia—a citizen of no mean city<sup>1</sup>; and I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.” The request being granted, they heard him patiently, until he mentioned his mission to the Gentiles, and then, they broke out into that pitch of fury, which is betokened in the East, by throwing dust into the air, on which occasion, the circumstance of Paul being a citizen of Rome, alone saved him from the greatest indignities and torture. The day following he appeared before the Jewish Sanhedrim: he was next rescued from a horrible conspiracy formed against him by more than forty Jews, who bound themselves by an

<sup>1</sup> *Comp. Dion. Cassius, Lib. xlvii. Tom. I. p. 501. Edit. Hamburg. Albert Fabric. 1750.*

oath of execration, that they would neither eat nor drink, until they had taken his life. But the designs of wicked men are easily defeated by an overruling Providence : and thus this most formidable plot was brought to light by the prudence and activity of a youth, an event which caused a heathen soldier to take a peculiar interest in the fate of this great Christian teacher, and with a sufficient escort, to send him down to Cesarea, where the governor, Felix, resided : where Paul also was detained in the judgment-hall of Herod, until his accusers arrived : of these not only did the chief priest go down with their elders, but they arrayed also against Paul, all the subtilty of a Greek orator, whose false accusations were answered by Paul, in such simplicity of truth, that Felix was even induced to defer his decision, and to treat the apostle with extreme indulgence. We might dwell with much advantage upon the subsequent intercourse of Paul with the Roman governor : Felix trembled before the truth of God's word ; but it was through fear of future punishment alone, and not repentance for the sins of his life : he found no convenient season for troubling his heart or his conscience<sup>1</sup> : nay, his avarice was tempted even by

<sup>1</sup> Two Heathen writers bear unfortunate testimony to the character of Felix. Vide *Tacit. Annal. Lib. xii. cap. 54.*

his destitute prisoner, and he hoped that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might be loosed : silver and gold, however, the apostle had none ; but he was rich in grace and wisdom, and adorned with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. From his arrival at Jerusalem, to his appearing before Felix at Cesarea, only twelve days elapsed ; but he was now to be kept a prisoner until a new governor should arrive in the room of Felix, which was not until two years after these transactions : during his tedious imprisonment, we hear nothing of the apostle, it must have been, in all probability, a close confinement. Felix is said to have left him bound, implying that he had been so ever since his accusation : during this time, the Jews had evidently not ceased to clamour for his death ; for we learn, that Felix left him a prisoner, to do an agreeable thing to the Jews, on leaving his province : and even Festus, when he arrived, was actuated by the same motives. But Festus, however he might have been disposed, had no authority to refuse a Roman citizen's appeal to the emperor. This was made by St. Paul at the conclusion of the trial, which took place fourteen days after the arrival of the new governor ; he was not, however, sent

*Ibid. Historiar. Lib. v. cap. 9. and Sueton. in Vit. Claud. chap. 28.*

to Rome until after his celebrated apology before king Agrippa. As the time of his leaving Judea depends upon the arrival of Portius Festus, we are here assisted in our narrative and chronology, by collateral history. I shall not trouble you with all the reasons and arguments for adjusting the dates, but merely state, that upon the best and most accurate calculation, St. Paul set sail for Italy in the year of our Lord 62, and in the ninth year of the reign of Nero.

Agrippa had been removed from his kingdom to another province, by Claudius, whereby all sovereignty among the Jews was brought to an end : he was now, therefore, entirely under the control of the Roman governor, and it was on this account that he came to Cesarea with his sister Bernice, to pay court to Festus. Paul still honours him with the title of king, and attributes to him considerable knowledge and expertness in the laws and customs of his nation. The whole of the apostle's discourse is replete with that wisdom, zeal, and dignity, for which he was so distinguished ; and his general demeanour on this, as on most occasions, appears to have secured him respect, even as a prisoner, from the Roman authorities : the chief captain, Lysias, paid him great attention : the centurion, Julius, courteously entreated him, and gave him liberty to go and see his friends,

and refresh himself at Sidon ; he, and his company for his take, were honoured by the people of Melita ; and at Rome he was permitted to dwell by himself, with a soldier that kept him. When pleading before Agrippa, we observe firmness in his answers and appeals, but always tempered with a courtesy of manner and expression, which outward marks of a liberal education are seldom without their influence in securing respect for the persons of God's ministers, as they were to St. Paul. The apostle was accompanied in his voyage to Italy, by St. Luke, and by Aristarchus, a Thessalonian Christian—but we shall reserve, for our remaining Lecture, the subject of the spread of Christianity in the west, with the rest of Paul's ministry. By some it is supposed that he returned yet once again to Jerusalem, in which case he may have also revisited Asia ; but of this we are not sure : if he did return, he must have witnessed, with anguish of soul, the defection which had already begun in many of the churches. These melancholy events it is not in our power to recount to you ; but, before finally taking leave of the transactions in the east, we may mention the things which took place in the mother-church of Jerusalem after Paul's departure from Cesarea.

It was not long before Festus died in his province : he was succeeded by Albinus ; and

Ananus was appointed by Agrippa to the office of high priest. The malice of the Jews, being disappointed in the safe departure of Paul, was now turned upon James, who has been often mentioned, as holding the chief government of the church at Jerusalem. Eusebius, in the language of the fourth century, calls him the bishop of the Church ; but, if this title be not admitted in its fullest sense, it must be allowed, that, in reading such expressions as “ James and the elders,” combined with the authoritative manner in which he spake in the Apostolic synod, the outline of Episcopal government in individual churches is sufficiently traced, to make that form of ecclesiastical polity rest upon scriptural authority. From Hegesippus, an ancient writer, who immediately succeeded the apostles, and from Clement the fellow-labourer of St. Paul, Eusebius gathers some particulars relative to the life and character of James, and his account is supported by the concurrent testimony of Josephus<sup>1</sup>. We are told, then, that the government of the church at Jerusalem was committed to him by the apostles : on account of his very great strictness and zeal in the observance of some particular ceremonies of the Jewish reli-

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Euseb. Ecclesiast. Histor.* lib. ii. cap. xxiii. ; and *Joseph. Antiq. Jud.* lib. xx. cap. viii. p. 897. Tom. II.

gion, he was much less obnoxious to the Jews than the rest of the Christian teachers; it would indeed appear that he had taken upon him the vows of the ancient Nazarites, and this may account, in some degree, for the prompt manner in which he especially suggested the same to Paul, that he might avoid giving offence. Of the prophetess Anna, it is said, and that with approbation, that she departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. James was of a similar cast of devotion, he is reported, by the writers I have just named, to have frequented the temple alone, where he might be found, on his knees, praying for the sins of the people. These devotional exercises acquired for him much respect and reverence amongst a people who set such a high value upon external acts of devotion, and served to divert their malice, as it should seem, for awhile, from the new doctrines he had embraced, which had taught him the truth as it is in Jesus. This was no doubt wisely done for the preservation of “as many as were ordained to eternal life” in Jerusalem, and consequently were yet to be brought into the fold. His strict observance of some Jewish ceremonies, and his attachment to the law<sup>1</sup>, run through the style of his Epistle,

<sup>1</sup> Anointing the sick with oil (James v. 14.) was a Jewish practice—(see Lightfoot Talmudical Exercitat. on Matt. vi. 17.)



which has come down to us, and it is addressed to the twelve tribes, amongst whom he acquired the title of the Just. The rulers, at Jerusalem, seeing in him a person of great influence among the Christians, at the same time that he observed the temple worship, thought they could prevail with him by flattery to stop the people in their error concerning “the crucified Redeemer.” But this experiment only drew him forth as the champion of the truth, and as a real and devoted disciple ; and, being publicly called upon, he scorned to deny Jesus as the Saviour, but “confessed him before men.” In the midst of a large assembly, he exclaimed, “Why ask ye me of Jesus the Son of Man, since he sitteth at the right hand of the Great Power in Heaven, and shall come in the clouds of the air?”—a number of voices, proceeding from his fellow-Christians in the throng, re-echoed the confession, crying, “Hosanna in the highest to the Son of David.” This led to his immediate destruction ; they took him down from the elevated station on which they had placed him for a different purpose, and stoned him : having recovered himself a little,

—the apostles, on their first mission, employed the ceremony in performing *miraculous* cures, (Mark vi. 13,) which the *elders of the church*, in the apostolic age, also were enabled to do. James principally advised Paul, at Jerusalem, to become “unto the Jews as a Jew.” (Acts xxi. 18—26.)

he prayed, on his knees, “ I beseech thee, O Lord God and Father, forgive them, they know not what they do ;” upon these words, he was struck on the head with a fuller’s club, and died. Josephus, as I have observed, confirms this account, calling him James the Just, the brother of Jesus, whom they call Christ, and he adds, that certain others were stoned with him ; this violence he attributes to the high priest, who took the opportunity of doing these things before the arrival of the new governor, further adding, that the people saw, in the calamities which soon befel them, the Divine vengeance for the blood of this just person. About this time Jerusalem began to be a prey to those factions which only ended in that awful destruction which has ever since appalled the posterity of Judah. If ever Paul returned, this was the situation in which he found his unhappy people. It belongs not to our subject to relate the calamities which befel Jerusalem, which soon ceased to form any part of the Christian world. Jesus had warned his followers that when they should see certain signs, they were to flee from the scene of God’s wrath, which they did accordingly : Josephus informs us that many left the city as a sinking ship, and it is probable no Christians remained in it, but that they went and stationed themselves in a village called Pella, situated beyond the River Jordan.

The successor of James is said by many writers to have been Simeon the son of Cleophas, with whom ended the Church, which was the first fruits of the Gospel, and thus perished the city which had killed the prophets, and stoned them with stones. The emperor Titus, though a Pagan, owned the hand of God in his victory, and in the obstinate madness of the enemy which rendered it so destructive. I would fain have taken a glance at the subsequent condition of the principal churches in the East, but my limits are already passed, and it is time to conclude this lecture. You cannot but observe, my brethren, in all these important incidents, that there were two principles directly opposed to each other, whether you regard the general or the individual reception of God's truth. At one place you see a pious multitude engaged in prayer with the apostle Paul, at another you see an inhuman conspiracy formed to take away his life. Felix trembles, and Agrippa is almost persuaded to be a Christian ; but the struggle between conviction and the natural love of sin, ended in favour of the latter, whence it came, that their spiritual condition was no better than that of the obstinate Jews who sought the life of him who told them the truth. How came it that the same individual was the object of affection at Tyre, and the object of a murderous hatred at Jerusalem ? We know Paul changed not the doctrine,

he preached the truth : his theme was, “ Jesus Christ and him crucified,” for he would know nothing else. There were then, as I observed, two principles brought into action by applying the touchstone of God’s truth : the principle of fallen, degraded human nature, and the principle of Divine grace : at Jerusalem it was the former : on the sea shore at Tyre it was the latter ; the one of sinful man, the other of God’s free mercy. The object was fixed and conspicuous ; how was it that some saw it with the eye of hatred, and others with the eye of gratitude ? This object was Christ suspended on the cross to expiate the sins of man. The pride of the Jews would not allow them to acknowledge their sins, much less the necessity of such a ransom as that paid for them : and, instead of the offer of mercy awakening conviction of guilt, it only stung the foes of Christ to wrath, until they fell upon the messenger of the glad tidings. Now, brethren, we would not have you ignorant, that whenever these same eternal truths are held up to the view of men, and pressed close upon the conscience, there are the same two principles brought into action, whatever may be the age of the world or the condition of civilized life. There is the natural resistance to the force of them, and there is the humble reception of them by the grace given. The resistance does not always show itself in the

way the Jews showed theirs, by outward violence : on the contrary, it is sometimes, only a half resistance, like that of Agrippa, almost persuaded, or it is rendered ineffectual through indifference. But how are we interested in the trembling of Felix, or the amiable compliance of Agrippa ? We wish to show you only that it is the same spirit of “ enmity against God,” in whatever modified shape it may appear : it is the natural dislike to submit to the teaching of God’s Holy Spirit, and to receive “ the mystery of godliness ” into the heart, which the strength of reason cannot analyse. And the very circumstance, that the effect of preaching the Gospel is the same now as it was in Paul’s time, exciting the hatred and contempt of some, and the gratitude of others, is to my mind a very strong proof that it is Paul’s doctrine ; for when a minister of God’s word has declared his message, in a manner which pleases every one, he may almost suspect that there is some part of the counsel of God therein, which he has not fully declared, since there is a carnal mind and there is a spiritual mind ; and if these should be satisfied with the same elements, it seems to me to show at least, that the food is insipid. We speak not as though we would have men’s anger excited against our Gospel : that were an unworthy notion, but we speak of those consequences which

seem so inevitable, that they may really become the criterion of the existence of primitive Christianity. If ye, brethren, have embraced from the heart, that form of doctrine, which sets forth salvation through Christ alone, the necessary renovation of the heart and affections, in order to receive and appreciate the remedy provided for human transgression, and the sanctification of the spirit, in order to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord; then these things will be felt and inwardly discerned, not as mere theories, but as realities, (and it were a lifeless Christianity which would seek to annul such feelings), then, I repeat, these doctrines will not be irksome, but they will be music to your ears, and joy to your hearts, “thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.” But, if ye are still far from God; if ye can ill bear the thoughts of relinquishing the vanities of this world for the kingdom of heaven’s sake; if ye cling to your own excellences, or if ye deny or deride the Spirit’s influence, as an idea to be entertained only by the enthusiast, because it is sometimes abused,—so surely will ye harbour in your secret thoughts a rebellion against the word of God, which does so unceasingly proclaim the sinfulness and selfishness of man, whereby he is condemned, and the free grace and mercy of God in Christ Jesus, whereby alone he can be saved. Let this then, brethren, be the criterion of your

condition before God : and when ye have compared God's own word with these our views of it, and made yourselves as it were auditors of Paul's preaching, and taken account of those who rejected his doctrines, and of those who received them ; then be serious in your prayers to the Giver of all grace, and He will direct your hearts into a right discernment of the truth, that ye may embrace it, and ever hold it fast, and so become members of His true Church, which He hath redeemed with His own blood ; and finally may be made partakers of His glory in a world to come, through His merits and mediation.

## LECTURE VI.

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ST. PAUL'S VOYAGE TO ITALY—THE STATE OF CHRISTIANITY ON HIS ARRIVAL AT ROME (A.D. 62)—THE REST OF HIS ACTS—CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS.

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ROMANS i. 15.

*So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also.*

WHEREVER the great truths of religion are deeply felt, and the benefits resulting from a sincere reception of them, acknowledged and experienced, there is a disposition to impart the inestimable blessings to others, who know them not, and to bring all mankind if possible under their immediate influence. When David prayed for remission of sins and for sanctification, in the penitential psalm which breathes the language of deep humiliation, it was with the ultimate view of imparting to others the knowledge



of true religion. “ Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free Spirit, then will I teach transgressors Thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee.” We may further add, that the more a person feels the value of the blessings we allude to, the more will he desire their propagation, until that which was mere desire will grow into zeal and activity, and will in some way or other so show itself in him, that he may be truly said to be engaged in the service of religion. It cannot, therefore be denied, that Christianity is a proselyting system ; if it were not so, then “ would the children of this world be always wiser in their generation than the children of light.” We often see men, when impressed with sentiments and opinions of a mere worldly nature, (not to say that they are either wrong or injurious), inflamed with such zeal for instilling them into others, that they leave no means untried, but are constant and indefatigable in endeavouring to accomplish their end, and if their zeal be accompanied with evident sacrifices, they generally obtain credit for sincerity, notwithstanding their system itself should be condemned. But, if the real Christian were to sit still, and take no interest in the propagation of his principles, then it would come to pass, that the believer in Christ would be the only person without those evidences of appreciating

his own principles, which are requisite, in every other subject, as a proof of sincerity. I do not deny that there are many false teachers and false prophets who are sincere in the profession of their errors, and would “compass sea and land to make one proselyte.” Zeal is not, therefore, of itself a sufficient indication of the truth; but this we say, that whenever we can satisfy ourselves of the sincerity of the professor, we generally admire his zeal; and if it be not an evidence of the truth, it proves at least, that the person believes what he advocates to be true, because his zeal is sincere; whereas without zeal, or with that indifference which in our day marks a large number of professing Christians, one can hardly obtain credit for the belief of that which is professed. St. Paul acted otherwise: he had preached the unsearchable riches of Christ from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum; that is, in almost every part of the Roman empire in the East: he had laboured for years, in the same cause, in those places through which we have traced him in our preceding lectures; but he was not yet satisfied, his zeal knew no bounds, nay, he considered it as a necessity laid upon him to propagate the Gospel. “I am a debtor,” he says, “both to the Greeks and Barbarians, the ignorant and the learned, so much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to

you that are at Rome also." We are not to suppose this to be an expression of mere compliance with the wishes of others, it was Paul's earnest desire to preach at Rome. You will recollect, that about three years previously to the period we are now about to touch upon, Paul purposed in spirit to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome." Now, it was about the time he formed this resolution, that he wrote the Epistle to the Romans, in which he expresses his readiness to preach the Gospel among them: his desire was confirmed by a special message from Heaven; for, in the night which followed his trial before the Sanhedrim, where the apostle bore witness to the sacred cause of Christ, it is related, the Lord stood by him, and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul, for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome." So far was his wish to propagate the Gospel in the West ratified by a miraculous interposition of heaven; and herein he had an assurance and a guide to his zeal, to which we, with the ordinary helps of the Spirit, can lay no claim. We must, therefore, be content to feel our way by prudence and well-tempered zeal, but still we must be mindful we have the same cause to defend; and I trust, my brethren, that in these times of excitement and general inquiry, we shall be endued

with a portion of Paul's spirit, as much as in us lies, to preach the Gospel to them that are at Rome also. There is a way of proclaiming that Gospel, which no man can controvert, viz. by such a Christian deportment, and by such evangelical graces, as may be visible to all who come within their influence, so that it shall be said of us as the damsel possessed with a spirit of divination said of Paul and Silas, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation;" and never, so long as I acknowledge the power of God's truth upon the mind, will I be persuaded that in every place there will not be some "jailer" who will fall down before the force of truth, whether exhibited in words or in deeds, and tremblingly exclaim, "What shall I do to be saved?" With our privileges therefore, brethren, as those to whom are committed the oracles of God, there is this great responsibility, that in all things we show what the riches of God's grace and mercy can effect in the outward conduct, and make that faith we profess worthy of the compliment which Paul once paid to the Christians of this very city, whose faith was "spoken of throughout the whole world:"—but it is time to take up the sacred narrative.

Since our last lecture you will probably have examined anew, in your private meditations, all

that happened to the apostle at Jerusalem and at Cesarea, and it will be borne in mind that in consequence of his appeal to the emperor, which was a Roman citizen's privilege, the object of St. Paul's desire was accomplished by providential circumstances over which he seemed to have no control. It may also be remarked, that Agrippa and Festus virtually acquitted the prisoner, and, as Pilate said to the multitude, "he found no fault" in the spotless Jesus, so did these judges of Paul's conduct declare, that "he might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Cæsar." It being determined that the apostle and his company should sail into Italy, they were consigned, along with other prisoners, to the care of a centurion, and sailed towards the coast of Asia, touching at the port of Sidon. At that place Paul was enabled to confer with his brethren in Christ, and give them a parting exhortation to continue stedfast in the faith. He next sailed along the coasts of his native country, Cilicia, and, arriving at Myra, a small port on the Lycian coast, the passengers were all finally transferred into an Alexandrian ship which was bound for the shores of Italy. The whole account of this voyage, as far as the island of Malta, is given in the 27th chapter of the Acts, and it is allowed by all those who have carefully examined the details, that none but a person who had actu-

ally made the voyage could have written so accurate a description, and that he must, moreover, have had a considerable knowledge of geography and the nautical affairs of that period. But although this is the case (showing, indeed, internal evidence of the authenticity of the history), St. Luke seems ever to have had an object in view far beyond the mere incidents which led to its accomplishment ; he continually refers to the words and actions of Paul, tells us of the spirit of prophecy with which he was endued, and of the influence which he acquired over the ship's crew, who were in all 276 persons. In their dangerous course, from Crete to Malta, we have an instance of that Divine protection which those can best appreciate who “ do business in great waters :” it was mercy already designed and announced beforehand to the chosen instrument of God ; but although Paul was thus assured that he must stand at Cæsar's judgment-seat, and that God had given him all that sailed with him ; although he knew every circumstance that would happen, by revelation, (for he told them they must be wrecked upon a certain island), still he spared no exertion, and called upon all the rest so to act, as if every thing depended upon themselves ; whereas nothing depended upon them, since it was already decreed. In this, brethren, is not the sovereign will and fore-knowledge of

God discerned to be consistent with the utmost freedom and energy of human action ? First, the apostle says, “ God hath given me all that sail with me,” and again, he saith, “ except ye abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved<sup>1</sup>.” In all the incidents of life, the Christian will ever recognise the same Divine economy ; when the struggle is past, and he revolves in his mind the active part he hath taken in them, he discovers so little of his own power, that it is utterly unworthy to be reckoned with that “ mighty working whereby the Lord is able to subdue all things to Himself ;” and thus he sees nothing that hath brought him to the haven of his desire, but the sovereign power of God, and therefore to Him he ascribes all the glory and the praise.

This voyage from Jerusalem to Italy was undertaken at a season of the year when sailing in the Mediterranean was the most dangerous<sup>2</sup>, viz. about the time of the equinox—denoted by St. Luke, “ after the Fast.” This was on the tenth day of the seventh month, which answers to the 10th of October ; and it would almost appear, from

<sup>1</sup> See this subject satisfactorily handled by Dr. Chalmers, in his Sermon “ on the Doctrine of Predestination.” *Sermons*, &c. p. 294.

<sup>2</sup> In contemplating the apostle’s voyage, we must dismiss from our thoughts the modern improvements in the art of navigation.

the tenor of the history, that they were nearly six weeks before they reached Malta. As their ship was entirely destroyed, they were detained in that island for three months, during which period the things occurred which are set forth in the former part of the last chapter of the Acts. We find St. Paul was enabled to perform many miraculous cures, and thus to advance the interest of Christ's kingdom ; it is not, however, said, that the " barbarous people " were in a state to receive the Gospel. The history of that island is indeed such, that it may be doubted whether the real truths of Christianity ever took root in it, the duty of planting them there now devolves upon our own country, to which (as a Christian traveller has remarked) this celebrated island is entrusted, as a portion of that mass of power, which Divine Providence has committed to her, to be exercised for the benefit of mankind<sup>1</sup>. The apostle and his companions left Melita at the end of the winter, and landed at Syracuse in Sicily, where they remained three days ; in which famed city it does not appear there were any Christians. After touching at Rhegium, on the straits of Charybdis, now called Reggio, they arrived by a prosperous voyage on the coast of Naples, and

<sup>1</sup> See *Jowett's Christian Researches in the Mediterranean*,  
" *Advantages of Malta*," p. 376.



finally landed at Puteoli : this was a town situated in the celebrated bay of Baiaë, the summer residence of the great and wealthy men of ancient Rome : it is, no doubt, familiar to many of you under the name of Pozzuoli, and it still retains many traces of its antiquity. We are here introduced, for the first time, to the Christians of Italy ; it is said they found brethren at Puteoli, and were desired by them to remain awhile among them, with which request they complied, and abode seven days.

It is very probable, as the communications between this city and Rome were frequent, and as there were already some persons of consequence at Rome converted to the faith, that the religion of Jesus went out to this part of Italy from the metropolis itself. From them the apostle would receive intelligence of the state of things in Rome, and it appears the opportunity of his residence at Puteoli was seized in order to announce his approaching arrival ; hence when he arrived at the Pontine Marshes, he was met by some of the brethren, who had gone out a distance of fifty-one miles to meet him, at the station called Appii Forum, which still preserves the name : others went as far as the “Tres Tabernæ,” now called Le Castella, distant from the city thirty-three miles : such was the anxious desire of those primitive believers to pay their respects to the great apostle of the

Gentiles. The Appian Way<sup>1</sup> had presented scenes of magnificence, and the conquerors of the world had moved thereon in all the pomp of a triumph; crowds of citizens had issued forth to meet the patriotic Cicero returning from exile<sup>2</sup>; but never before did it present a scene at once so affecting and sublime as this. When Paul saw the blessed company, in a country wherein he must have felt himself a stranger indeed, going in the condition of an accused criminal to lay his case before the master of the world, he felt all the gratitude and consolation which will ever accompany the conscience void of offence, in similar cases, and which will be drawn out by the accents of sympathy to which accused innocence so tenderly turns itself, “he thanked God, and took courage.”

<sup>1</sup> The stations on the Via Appia are adjusted with the ancient Itineraries as follows :—

VIA APPIA.	MODERN NAMES.
Ab Urbe	
Bobellas seu ad Nonum	m. p. x. Boville
Ariciam . . .	m. p. vi. Aricia
Sublanuvium . .	m. p. vii. S. Gennarello
Tres Tabernas . .	m. p. x. Le Castella
Ad Sponsas . . .	m. p. xi. For Vergata
Appii Forum . . .	m. p. vii. Foro Appio,
&c.	&c.

See *Dissertaz. de A. Nibbez, delle Vie Antiche*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Compare the *Letter of Cicero to Atticus*, Lib. iv. Ep. 1.

The centurion who had charge of the prisoners had, by this time, conceived a great respect and even veneration for Paul : he had witnessed his firmness in the dangers of the deep, had seen his miracles at Melita, and now he witnessed the affection which bound together those professors of the new religion. Owing to his report, as it is probable, Paul, upon arriving at the city, was not delivered up with the rest of the prisoners to the public officer ; but was suffered to dwell by himself with a single soldier as his guard. It is evident he was left much at liberty to speak and to act<sup>1</sup> ; partly, no doubt, from the respectability of his character ; but much more because of the indifference with which a private individual was regarded, teaching among so many others, what the Romans considered as a mere system of philosophy : this will lead us to take a review of Rome at that period as far as it would affect the apostle's preaching. I do not mean in these observations to trouble you with “ the endless genealogies and old wives' fables ” of the gods of Pagan Rome, nor to involve your attention in the intricacies of that philosophy and vain deceit through which so many were spoiled. What-

<sup>1</sup> Until persons accused were brought to their trial, they were under the care of the magistrates called “ in libera custodia.” See *Adams' Roman Antiquities*, p. 272, edit. of 1792 ; but compare Acts xxviii. 31.

ever Paul might have to contend with in his hired house among the professors of Heathen doctrines, he was already prepared for, from what he had seen at Athens, and his education gave him an immense advantage in combating those fancies and corruptions of men. The Epicureans, who thought that the true doctrine for them to teach was the best method of enjoying this world, and that this should be worked into a system of refined morality<sup>1</sup>, were the most prominent and influential class of persons then at Rome. The Stoics, who considered every thing regulated by irrevocable fate, and consequently thought all human actions indifferent, formed also another large class ; still there is every reason to believe that even out of these men, some were chosen to show forth, to a benighted world, the power and riches of Divine grace.

With regard to the state of Christianity, it is chiefly from St. Paul's own Epistle to the Romans, that we gather our information. Of those who were converted by St. Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, some we find were strangers of Rome, both Jews and proselytes, that is, persons who had been Heathens, but were then brought over to the Jewish faith, having submitted to the rite of circumcision : these, as is

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Cicero's Tusculan. Quæstion.* lib. v. cap. 33. and compare the second lecture of our first series.

probable, returning to the metropolis, first formed themselves into a society or church; and with that zeal which particularly belonged to the first converts, endeavoured to spread the religion of Christ. This had now been in operation ever since the year 33, that is to say, for upwards of thirty years, there had been Christians in Rome; and they had by this time arrived at so great a degree of distinction, partly from their strict adherence to the faith, and partly because they dwelt in the metropolis of the empire, that their faith was renowned in every part of the Christian world. They were all esteemed by the Romans as Jews, and perhaps this mistake saved them from persecution, until the age of Nero, when their numbers became so augmented, as to attract observation. The greatest number of them lived in the district beyond the Tyber, and there can be little doubt of that being the quarter of Rome, wherein the earliest Christian assemblies were publicly held<sup>1</sup>. In the time of Domitian,

<sup>1</sup> A Heathen writer informs us, that “when the Christians had got possession of a certain public spot in Rome (for the purpose of celebrating their worship), the low victuallers claimed it as belonging to them. The Emperor, Alexander Severus, decided the matter, by ordaining that, in whatever manner God might be worshipped on that spot, it would be better than giving it to the victuallers (*Popinariü*).—*Lampri-dius in Vit. Alex. Sev.* cap. 48. Agreeably to this intimation,

many of them (whom a poet perhaps comfounds with the Jews) lived in the neighbourhood of the Porta Capena<sup>1</sup>, not far from the place where we now see the immense ruins of the baths of Caracalla, between the Cœlian and Aventine Hills: there were others who, in the time of Nero, were received into the houses of private individuals, living about the Esquiline Hill; and, if there be any thing in the tradition of localities, it is, perhaps, to this quarter we must especially direct our attention, as to the scenes of early Christian history<sup>2</sup>.

Among the Christians which Paul found at Rome were, doubtless, Aquila and Priscilla, with whom he had lived at Corinth: such was the regard they had for the apostle that, on one occasion, they had already run the risk of losing

Anastasius, in his life of Calixtus I. (who was contemporary with Alexander Severus, A. D. 222,) informs us, that a place called the "Taberna Meritoria," or "Fons Olei," was obtained by Calixtus, where he built a church. To this the Basilica of S. Maria, in Trastevere, succeeded. See *Burgess's Topography and Antiquities of Rome*, Vol. II. p. 247.

<sup>1</sup> *Juvenal*. Sat. III. v. 13. See *Topography, &c.* Vol. I. p. 131, and compare Fleury. *Hist Ecclesiast.* Liv. II. chap. 52.

<sup>2</sup> Such for instance, as the baths of Novatus, and the house of Pudens, where the *secret* assemblies were held in the first century. On which, see "*Topography*," &c. Vol. I. p. 207.

their own lives to save one so valuable as his: they had a church (that is, a number of Christians were accustomed to hold their stated assemblies) in their house. The persons whom St. Paul enumerates and salutes in the last chapter of his Epistle, appear from their names to have been for the most part Greeks; and some of them were even of longer standing as Christians than Paul himself. They must, therefore, have been the very proselytes converted at Jerusalem; we have, for instance, Andronicus and Junia, relations and fellow-labourers of Paul, persons of note among the apostles, “who also,” he adds, “were in Christ before me:” two other persons of some distinction are also enumerated, *viz.* Aristobulus and Narcissus; but, as the apostle greets not them, but their “households” or friends, it is probable they were dead when he wrote his Epistle: the latter of these is supposed to have been the celebrated freedman of the Emperor Claudius, who was put to death by Agrippina, at the commencement of the reign of Nero<sup>1</sup>. As the Epistle to the Romans was written three years before Paul’s arrival in Italy, some changes, amongst others, must have taken place in the interval, for the better: it is very probable those divisions and offences contrary to

<sup>1</sup> Vide *Tacit. Annal.* Lib. XIII. cap. 1.

the doctrine they had learned, were now healed ; for, as the time of persecution drew nigh, they drew nearer to their Redeemer, and consequently, to one another : and when Paul did arrive amongst them, he would, doubtless, become an additional bond of union. Such, then, was the state of Christianity at Rome, when Paul, three days only after his arrival, sent and called the leaders of the Jews together, to lay his case before them, and to know their decision ; observing that he had committed nothing against the people, nor against the customs of the fathers, for which he ought to have been delivered up as a prisoner to the Romans : nor had he on the other hand, ought to accuse his nation of. It appears, that when those Jews at Jerusalem had caused the apostle to be expelled from their coasts, they considered it better to give up their prosecution of the case, which, at the best, it might be difficult for them to sustain before a Heathen tribunal. The Jews at Rome having received no account either of Paul or of his accusation, without inquiring into the doctrines which he taught, at once condemned his sect ; for “ it was every where spoken against.” Curiosity, however, prompted them to inquire what this new doctrine was ; and, as Paul was glad of every opportunity to preach the Gospel, a day was appointed for the occasion, and many of



them came to his lodging. For a whole day, from morning till evening, did the indefatigable apostle expound and testify to them the nature of the kingdom which Christ had come to establish upon earth : he went through the writings of Moses and the prophets, and pointed out every thing relating to Jesus of Nazareth ; and when he had ended all his arguments and exhortations, he saw the same result as he had witnessed in the east, from preaching the same truths, “ some believed, and some believed not.” But the faithful ambassador of Christ acquitted himself boldly, and pointed out to the unbelievers the prophecy of Isaiah, which had direct reference to this perverseness of heart ; and he then proclaimed that the children of the heathen world would receive that salvation which the heirs of the promise refused, and thus would be verified the saying of our Lord, “ many shall come from all quarters, and sit down with the patriarchs in the kingdom of God, whilst the children of the kingdom shall be shut out.” The Jews went away when he spoke of the Gentiles, and had great reasonings among themselves. It was not so easy for them as it was for the unbelievers in Jerusalem, to show their malignity towards Paul in Rome ; he was therefore left in his own hired house unmolested by them, and not forbidden by any man to preach or to teach the

things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ. Many persons came to hear, some, no doubt, from curiosity, others with honest intentions, and not a few of the upper classes of society ; for at a subsequent period salutations for the Christians in the east were tendered from Cæsar's household. The apostle was considered as a prisoner, although having this liberty, and in the whole, continued for a space of two years, that is, until the year 65, with which account the narrative of the Acts concludes. We may now collect a few particulars relative to Paul and the subsequent state of the Christian world, from his Epistles.

During the two years of his residence at Rome the blessed apostle wrote several of those letters to the Churches of the east, which form part of our canon of Scripture. Those to the Ephesians and the Colossians were, in all probability, written first. In the former he calls himself a prisoner of Jesus Christ, and an ambassador of the Gospel in bonds : and we learn that Tychicus, one of the Greek Christians, who had accompanied him into Asia about three years previously, had been in constant attendance and communication with him, and was the bearer of the Epistle. He was also charged with the Epistle to Colosse along with Onesimus, which shows that the two were written at the same time. A most able writer has pointed out the great simila-

rity which appears in the composition of these two Epistles<sup>1</sup>, the very same sentences occurring in both, except with that slight variation which removes all suspicion of collusion. From the Epistle to the Colossians, we learn that Aristarchus, who had accompanied Paul in his voyage, was made prisoner along with him ; John, i. e. Mark, the nephew of Barnabas, about whom the contention took place at Antioch, was now with the apostle, so also was St. Luke, and Demas, who afterwards fell away from his zeal, through love of the present world ; there is also honourable mention made of Epaphras, as a person of great piety and zeal, who was also a prisoner for the Gospel's sake. St. Paul alludes to an Epistle which appears to have been written to the Laodicæans about the same time, but which has not come down to us. He exhorts the Colossians to read it, and also to send a copy of his Epistle to them of Laodicea : an evident injunction, laid upon all Christian Churches, to see that the sacred Scriptures be read and expounded. He cautions the Colossians against being spoiled by philosophy and vain deceit, against voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, which things, of course, indicate that these errors had already begun to appear in the Church of Christ ; and if

<sup>1</sup> *Paley's Horæ Paulinæ*, chap. v.

we had to treat of more recent periods of ecclesiastical history, they would occupy much of our attention, and impose upon us a still more melancholy task. Onesimus was also the bearer of a short letter to some private individuals, whose names were Philemon, Apphia, and Archippus, together with the assembly of Christians in the house of the latter—these were all living at Colosse, in which city Archippus appears to have had a pastoral charge. Onesimus was probably a Colossian, and converted to the faith by St. Paul at Rome : he had committed some fault against Philemon, for which Paul entreats his indulgence. He expresses some hopes of being set at liberty, and so being enabled to visit Asia, and that with such confidence, as to request Philemon to prepare him a lodging.

St. Paul's next Epistle, to which we shall refer for an instant, is that to the Philippians, written, as we may suppose from some expressions in it, towards the end of his confinement. He hopes to come to them shortly himself, and says "he will send Timothy immediately, as soon as he shall see how it will go with him." This sentence helps to illustrate the date and writer of the nameless Epistle to the Hebrews ; we find therein the following words to compare with those just cited, " Know ye not that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he come

shortly, I will see you." As this Epistle was written for the purpose of showing the Jews the real meaning of the Levitical dispensation, and its reference to the great atonement made on the cross for the sins of men, and as Paul was especially obnoxious to the Jews, because of his frequent communications with the heathen, it seemed expedient not to begin by the usual salutations, lest by prefixing his name, the Jews might have rejected it at once without a reading. It intimates that Christianity was spread beyond the limits of Rome, "They of Italy salute you." From these indications the date and the composition of the Epistle may be inferred; but since the style so much resembles the Acts of the Apostles, and we find St. Luke and Aristarchus still continuing with Paul, it seems very probable that the whole was the joint production of these inspired men, written by the pen of St. Luke, and approved or suggested by Paul<sup>1</sup>: it may, therefore, bear the date of the year 63, or the beginning of 64. In recurring

<sup>1</sup> The current of tradition runs in favour of St. Paul having been the *author* of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and it bears internal evidence of his superior mind and doctrine, besides the texts which have a direct reference to local circumstances. Nevertheless, Origen observed (and he lived little more than a century after the apostles), ὅτι ὁ χαρακτηρ τῆς λέξεως τῆς πρὸς Ἑβραίους ἐπιγεγραμμένης ἐπιστολῆς οὐκ ἔχει τὸν ἐν λόγῳ ἰδιωτικὸν τοῦ ἀποστόλου. (*Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. Lib. vi. cap. 25*) As it was so far a matter of doubt with Origen, it

for a moment to the Epistle to the Philippians, we find that the Gospel had been wonderfully promoted by Paul's residence at Rome, it had even penetrated into the profligate court of Nero<sup>1</sup>. The apostle had also given confidence to many of the brethren, so that they began, after his example, to speak the word more boldly. It is, indeed, distressing to hear him say, that "some preached Christ of envy, and strife, and contention, on purpose to add affliction to his bonds;" but even in this he could find cause for rejoicing; for by these means the Gospel was more widely diffused in the Gentile world. We might derive much instruction by a closer examination of the Epistles, if our time had allowed it; at present, however, we must be content with observing, that such, in general terms, was the manner in which St. Paul and his fellow-labourers employed the two years they dwelt at Rome. We have already enumerated five epistles, besides the one to Laodicea, now lost: and we may well suppose that he wrote many others, both to individuals and to churches. Besides this, his constant preaching and anxiety for the Christian world, or to use his own language, "Besides these things that came upon him daily, the care of all the

must remain so with us. The records of antiquity will be found to bear most upon the conclusion, that the matter is St. Paul's, but the style is St. Luke's.

<sup>1</sup> *Philip.* iv. 22.

churches." Think of the energy and the wonderful gifts of this prisoner of Christ, my brethren. He had, as it were, to bear up against the world: he was dependent upon the Christians in the east chiefly for his support, but he abstained from speaking much in respect of temporal wants. This was his great resource, as he declared to the Philippians: "I can do all things through Christ, who strengtheneth me."

After two years, the apostle was released, an event which took place about the spring of the year 64, and it has been made a question, into what part of the world he then went. He had announced his intention of visiting Spain, as you will recollect, in these words to the Romans: "Whosoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come unto you;" and St. Clement says, "He went preaching righteousness throughout all the world, even to the boundary of the west," which would confirm the fact<sup>1</sup>. Some writers

<sup>1</sup> Κηρυξ [γενόμενος] ἐν τε τῇ ἀνατολῇ καὶ ἐν [τῇ] δύσει, τὸ γενναῖον τῆς πίστεως αὐτοῦ κλέος ἔλαβεν, δικαιοσύνην διδάξας ὅλον τὸν κόσμον κ[αὶ ἐπὶ] τὸ τέρμα τῆς δύσεως ἐλθὼν, καὶ μαρτυρήσας ἐπὶ τῶν ἡγουμένων οὕτως ἀπηλλάγη τοῦ κόσμου.—*Ad Corinthios*, Epist. I. cap. 5. *Coteler. Patres Apostolici*, Tom. I. p. 151. *Edit. Amstelodam.* 1724.

There are various opinions as to the real meaning of this expression, (τὸ τέρμα, &c.) Epiphanius (*Hæres.* 27), St. Chrysostom (*Homil.* 76, in St. Matthew), St. Jerome (on

have even contended, that he went to “the islands of the sea,” and they number both the Gauls and Britons among his disciples. This latter journey seems to have been impossible; for, between his leaving Rome and returning to it again, there was not more than a space of about nine months; and in the course of that time, it is sufficiently evident he made a journey into the east. In his epistle to Titus, he speaks of his determination to winter at Nicopolis, which was a city of Epirus: and in writing to Timothy his last epistle, he says, he had left Trophimus sick at Miletum<sup>1</sup>. He speaks of having left

cap. xi. Isaiah, and v. Amos), say, that St. Paul preached in Spain: and we are to consider, that Paul himself had announced that intention; but on the other hand, it is alleged, that those Fathers only wrote in the fourth century, and Eusebius is silent—it is further evident that the ancient Fathers wrote *Δύσις* for Rome and Italy, but *τέρμα δύσεως* is another thing. Bishop Pearson explains the expression of Spain; Stillingfleet, of Britain. Bishop Fell sees nothing in it but Rome simply: it is certainly a slight foundation to build the conversion of Britain by Paul upon; but I had rather believe the apostle to have preached in Spain.

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Pearson thinks this is not meant of Miletus, near Ephesus (mentioned in Acts xx. 17.), for it does not appear Paul had left Trophimus there at all. (See Acts xxi. 29.) Certainly he did not the first time, but might he not have returned after his liberation? St. Paul's farewell words at Ephesus (Acts xx. 25.) are supposed to forbid this supposition; but I do not see why they need be taken so literally—



Timothy behind at Ephesus : Titus he had left in Crete. It also appears he had passed by Troas, and had visited Corinth. From these hints we may gather, that St. Paul, after his liberation, sailed first into Asia, taking the island of Crete in his way : after going to Miletum and Ephesus, he crossed the Egean Sea into Macedonia, and then went through the peninsula of Greece by Nicopolis : thus visiting, as he had expressed his intention, both the Colossians in Asia, and the Philippians in Macedonia. Consistently with this journey, which seems authorised by the epistles, he could hardly have visited the more remote parts of the west : it is, indeed, just possible he might have gone or returned by Spain ; but at all events he returned to Rome, and was made prisoner a second time, under far severer circumstances than before : this was about the beginning of the year 65.

The Second Epistle to Timothy is, as we have already observed, the last he wrote : in it we see the fortitude of the real Christian displayed, and his joy in the prospect of death. It is, in point of incident, more replete with interest than any other of the epistles, and it is difficult to read it without emotion. The spirit of evil had

there was another Miletus in the island of Crete ; but then we should have to explain how Timothy was left behind at Ephesus.

begun to work even in the Church of Christ. The apostacy in Asia was so extensive, that he declares they were all turned away from his doctrines; and he specifies the names of Phygellus and Hermogenes, of Hymeneus and Philetus, who held some heretical tenets about the resurrection, which appears to have been the first introduction of that subtle disputing, which afterwards exhibited such a loathsome spectacle in the eastern Churches, and ended in battle and murder, and finally put out the candle of truth. Whenever we shall see similar evils arise, and we ever feel disposed thereby to waver in that faith which is of the Gospel, what can we do better than take that comfortable sentence which follows St. Paul's rebuke of those false teachers? "Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his."

We have now to contemplate the great apostle in the last stage of his earthly career, when, after all his exertions and services in the cause of Christ, he was to exhibit to succeeding ages the triumph of faith and hope over the bitterest evils that man can inflict upon his fellow. At his return to Rome he was no longer permitted to remain as a prisoner at large, but was seized like the worst of criminals, and thrown into a dungeon: this is implied in his words to Timothy,

“ I suffer trouble as an evil-doer, even unto bonds.” His friends had now become so scarce, and so cautious, that he acknowledges it as an act of great kindness in Onesiphorus, that he sought him out very diligently, and found him. This appears to intimate his close confinement in some obscure place, not easy to be found<sup>1</sup>; but Onesiphorus was not ashamed of his chain, and oft administered to his comfort. He had to mourn over the apostacy of Demas, who was now no longer with him; and there was such a dispersion of all his former fellow-labourers, that only Luke was then with him. He had been arraigned once before the tribunal of the emperor, upon which a general panic seems to have seized the whole of the Christian community; for although he mentions some Romans of consequence, such as Pudens, who was a senator, and Linus, and Claudia, they all forsook him, and left him to

<sup>1</sup> Church tradition has been very busy in assigning the lower cell in the *Mamertine Prison*, for the place of St. Paul's confinement, and a miraculous spring, and the column to which both he and St. Peter were fastened, are exhibited. This prison (an undoubted monument of great antiquity) still exists, near the Arch of Septimius Severus, and the cell, consecrated by tradition, was where the state criminals were thrown, and those prisoners who had graced the Triumphs (see *Burgess's Topography and Antiquities*, Vol. I. p. 343.); but this was, of all prisons in the world (see *Juvenal Sat.* iii. v. 314.), the most renowned, and certainly required no diligence to find it out!

answer for himself. But, notwithstanding, says the undaunted Paul, “ The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear,” from which words we may infer, that he had borne witness to the truth of the Gospel before a large audience, not improbably in the very imperial court. His narrow escape from condemnation to death is expressed in these words, “ I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.” He is evidently, however, apprehensive of not being long in this world, and he expresses a strong desire to see Timothy, to be in some measure comforted for the loss of the many companions he enumerates. By alluding to his first hearing, and expressing his apprehensions for the future, it seems pretty clear that he had been ordered to appear a second time at the emperor’s tribunal, and that with little hopes of being spared. But what courage can compare with that of the real Christian ? Other men can brave death and danger, and rush unthinkingly into the battle, and walk carelessly on the brink of eternity ; but, to contemplate with calmness and resignation the prospect of death, and to see death advancing slowly, as the messenger which is to bear the soul before the tribunal of heaven—to endure and to look stedfastly on this, I say, you must be a Christian ; and happy is the man

who can say with our apostle, “ I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” Yes, verily, brethren, if there be a time more interesting than another in the life of a good man, if there be a more moral lesson to be learned from his experience, or if the inspiration of a brighter hope be to be derived from his serenity of thought, it is when he is about to put off this clay, and ascend to the regions of eternity. First, he knows that nothing can postpone the hour : “ I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand :” here is no repining at the shortness of life, nor any wistful eye cast back on all the man is leaving ; here is no lamenting over the mouth of the grave ; you hear not a murmur escape the lips of the dying Christian. Secondly, there is the complacency with which he regards his past life ; not in the language of boasting, nor in the pride of self-righteousness ; but, simply, that the faith which, from the beginning, was the gift of God, has been kept by him ; the course which must necessarily be run is finished, and all human things, like the shore in the distance, are fast receding from the sight. And, thirdly, there is the blessed and cheering hope of immortality : “ henceforward there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day,

and not to me only (for the Christian's feelings are never selfish), but unto all them also that love his appearing." These are the words of St. Paul; and they are the words of a person evidently prepared for and expecting death. There is every reason to conclude, that it happened to Paul according to his anticipation; and that, on his second appearance, he was condemned to die. As a Roman citizen, he was beheaded. Tradition says, he was taken three miles out of the city, to a place called "Aquæ Salvæ," now named the "Tre Fontane," and there put to death<sup>1</sup>, Lucina, a Roman matron, burying him in her field, by the side of the road to Ostia. Over a sepulchral stone, bearing the inscription "Paulo," Constantine is said to have reared one of the first Christian churches, and I need not describe to you the Basilica which is now rising again from its ruins, in the solitude of a district afflicted with the malaria<sup>2</sup>. However

<sup>1</sup> As Baronius only cites the authority of the Roman Martyrology for the "Aquæ Salvæ" being the scene of St. Paul's sufferings, I may despair of finding any other.—(See *Annales Ecclesiast.* A. D. 69. *Nero*, 13.) The story of the "Three Fountains" is, of course, not a matter of faith!

<sup>2</sup> The great authority for the antiquity of the churches in Rome is Anastasius Bibliothecarius, who wrote in the ninth century; but there is also a document in the Vatican Library which mentions St. Paul's Church on the Via Ostiensis, as existing in the year 386, and affords further proof that it had existed

these things may be, the apostle must have finished his course in the year 66 or the beginning of 67, having been a preacher of the Gospel for 32 years. He was probably involved in the calamity that burst upon the Christians in Rome, with which you are all doubtless acquainted; I mean the dreadful persecutions which took place under Nero, upon pretext of the Christians having set fire to the city. The evils which Christ had foretold would happen to his faithful followers, had now arrived : we have to contemplate the sheep of the flock in the midst of wolves. This very city became the theatre in which innocent blood was shed. It is not from the pen of a Christian, but from that of a Heathen writer, that we learn the end of those who were “ the beloved of God, and called to be saints.” The account which Tacitus has left us of this first persecution of God’s Church, although painful, affords a testimony to the primitive faith which is above all suspicion. “ The persons suspected of having burnt the city were,” observes the histo-

for some time previous to that period. (See *Itinerario di Roma da A. Nibby*. Tom. II. p. 478. edit. 1830.) The more modern but splendid Basilica was destroyed by fire in July 1823 ; and had it not been for the law of “ præmunire,” the royal protector of St. Paul’s at Rome (such was the king of England in Papal times) might have contributed towards restoring it.

rian, “ odious for their scandalous vices, and were called, by the common people, Christians. This name is derived from Christus their founder, who, in the reign of Tiberius, had been put to death as a criminal by the procurator Pontius Pilatus. The baneful superstition, although checked for the moment, broke out anew, and was not confined to Judea, where the mischief originated, but spread through Rome also, the place whither every thing that is outrageous or disgraceful in any part of the world is sure to come and be well received. The first apprehended were those who openly avowed themselves : and then, through means of them, an immense number of others were discovered. They were declared guilty, not so much on the charge of setting fire to the city, as for their hatred of mankind in general. In being put to death they had also to endure mockery : for instance, they were covered with skins of wild beasts, in order to be torn to pieces by dogs ; otherwise, they were fastened to crosses, or wrapped up in combustibles, so that when evening came on they might be burnt upon the lamp-posts. Nero gave up his own gardens for that exhibition, and he introduced the sports of the circus, at which he appeared in the costume of a charioteer, mixing with the populace, or else exhibiting in the chariot race. Hence it happened,” continues the historian, “ that the suf-



ferers, although guilty, and deserving the most exemplary punishments, became objects of commiseration : for it was evident they were not destroyed for the general good of society, but for the sake of gratifying the cruelty of a single individual<sup>1</sup>.” It is not always that we have a proof of the real character of the Christian, even by the act of martyrdom ; but these are the persons of whom Paul himself had said, but six years previously, “that they had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to them, and being then made free from sin, had become servants of righteousness :” such also were the persons of whom a writer, remarkable in other respects for his candour and veracity, could say the things I have just read to you, a melancholy example of the perversity of degraded human nature when ignorantly handling the things of God ! Paul may probably have wept over those dreadful scenes of carnage ; but what would have been his feelings if he had seen them repeated, by those professing Christianity, against one another ? Whether Heathen or Christian by name, however, it matters not ; until all shall know the truth as it is in Jesus, persecution will never cease : and perhaps it is designed as a means for stirring up the faithful people in God’s

<sup>1</sup> *Tacit. Ann.* lib. xv. chap. 44.

Church to bear a more signal testimony to the cause of His truth.

During the first century, if we were to continue the history of the Church, we should find it a still more melancholy task. The heresies of the Gnostics, Ebionites, Cerinthians, and others, soon sprung up<sup>1</sup>. Against whom St. John was left to raise the last inspired voice<sup>2</sup>: in the next persecution, which was begun against the Christians under Domitian, he was banished to the island of Patmos, where he penned the book of the Apocalypse [A. D. 96]: after his release, he returned to Ephesus, and there died<sup>3</sup>.

My brethren, the task which I imposed upon myself at the beginning of this holy season, is now but imperfectly accomplished. I have, however, had the satisfaction to comprise, in these few lectures, most of the events related in the sacred narrative: and if even I could have carried you beyond them, I doubt much whether it would not have been rather for your information, than your edification: for as soon as man begins to intermeddle with the simplicity of the

<sup>1</sup> See *Fleury Histoire Ecclesiast.* liv. ii. chap. 42. with the proper references to *Epiphanius* and *Irenæus*, and compare *Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast.* lib. iii. cap. 27—30.

<sup>2</sup> Consult *Horne's Introduction to the Scriptures*, &c. Vol. IV. p. 296—304.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Vol. IV. p. 490.

Christian faith, you would have found how dreadfully it becomes disfigured : and if for a moment ye were to dwell upon the character of the primitive faith and worship, and then carry forward your thoughts over a few generations, you would scarcely know where to look for that “ faith which was once delivered to the saints,” or for the descendants of those Romans, whose obedience and faith had pervaded the whole world. It is clear, then, we must cleave to the doctrines of Christ and His apostles, and never seek to know the truth of our holy religion from any other source than that of the Bible ; and though even a Paul should plant, and an Apollos water, let it always be remembered, that God alone can give the increase. And if, my brethren, you have derived any heartfelt interest and spiritual improvement from the subjects to which I have hereby invited your attention, recollect, I pray you, that they are ever before you in the sacred volume, and that I have scarcely ventured to draw out from any other source. All other subjects wax old, and become wearisome by repetition ; but the truths of the Gospel, and their effects upon the human heart, never fail to excite interest. Do ye, therefore, meditate upon the labours of the great apostle, and take his doctrines as your infallible guide, for he spake by the Spirit of God. Let

all your inquiries in history, and all your studies, be brought to bear upon these things. Never omit in your daily exercises to search that precious Word, which doth so effectually light up the path to eternity. See how the influence of the Spirit operated on the hearts and understandings of the first believers, “convincing them of sin,” conducting them to Christ the only sacrifice for sin, and sanctifying and purifying their souls ; and pray ye fervently that the same Spirit may direct and guide your hearts into the patient waiting for the Lord, and finally consider what the end of the Christian course is, when the good fight has been fought : and let the crown of immortality be ever kept in view, “that when Christ who is your life shall appear, ye also may appear with him in glory.”

THE END.

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